ZEUS

Ken Dowden

LONDON AND NEW YORK

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ZEUS

Sovereign ruler of the universe, controller of the weather, all-seeing father of gods and men: Zeus was the chief deity of the ancient Greek pantheon. His places of worship ranged from the household to Olympia, the greatest of all sanctuaries. His significance is reflected in the individual chapters dedicated to him in books on Greek religion and myth but this is the first attempt to capture him in the round, in a single volume, for many years.

In a study that is at once masterly and comprehensive, Ken Dowden presents a study of this fascinating god for the new millennium. Myth, cult and art are examined, as are philosophy, drama, theology, European painting and much more. Zeus is not just seen as a god of Greece itself, but also as a god of the developing Mediterranean world and of the Romans, when he became their 'Jupiter'. The importance of Zeus in the medieval period and modern times is discussed in a revealing section on reception.

The book contains many and varied illustrations, charts and maps and provides a thorough and accessible, as well as scholarly, introduction to the chief god in the Greek pantheon.

Ken Dowden is Professor of Classics, and Director of the Institute of Archaeology and Antiquity, at the University of Birmingham.

Ken Dowden

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First published 2006
by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada
by Routledge
270 Madison Ave, New York, NY 10016

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group

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This edition published in the Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2006.

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the publishers.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data
Dowden, Ken, 1950–
Zeus / Ken Dowden.— 1st ed.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 0–415–30502–0 (hardback : alk. paper) — ISBN 0–415–30503–9
(pbk. : alk. paper)
1. Zeus (Greek deity) I. Title.
BL820.J8D68 2005
292.2′113—dc22 2005009985

ISBN10: 0–415–30502–0 (hbk)
ISBN10: 0–415–30503–9 (pbk)
ISBN13: 978–0–415–30502–0 (hbk)
ISBN13: 978–0–415–30503–7 (pbk)

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SERIES FOREWORD

> For a person who is about to embark on any serious discourse or task, it is proper to begin first with the gods.
>
> (Demosthenes, *Letters* 1.1)

WHY GODS AND HEROES?

The gods and heroes of classical antiquity are part of our culture. Many function as sources of creative inspiration for poets, novelists, artists, composers, filmmakers and designers. Greek tragedy's enduring appeal has ensured an ongoing familiarity with its protagonists' experiences and sufferings, while the choice of Minerva as the logo of one of the newest British universities, the University of Lincoln, demonstrates the ancient gods' continued emblematic potential. Even the world of management has used them as representatives of different styles: Zeus and the 'club' culture for example, and Apollo and the 'role' culture: see C. Handy, *The Gods of Management: who they are, how they work and why they fail* (London, 1978).

This series is concerned with how and why these figures continue to fascinate and intrigue. But it has another aim too, namely to explore their strangeness. The familiarity of the gods and heroes risks obscuring a vital difference between modern meanings and ancient functions and purpose. With certain exceptions, people today do not worship them, yet to the Greeks and Romans they were real beings in a system comprising literally hundreds of divine powers. These range

from the major gods, each of whom was worshipped in many guises via their epithets or 'surnames', to the heroes – deceased individuals associated with local communities – to other figures such as daimons and nymphs. The landscape was dotted with sanctuaries, while natural features such as mountains, trees and rivers were thought to be inhabited by religious beings. Studying ancient paganism involves finding strategies to comprehend a world where everything was, in the often quoted words of Thales, 'full of gods'.

In order to get to grips with this world, it is necessary to set aside our preconceptions of the divine, shaped as they are in large part by Christianised notions of a transcendent, omnipotent God who is morally good. The Greeks and Romans worshipped numerous beings, both male and female, who looked, behaved and suffered like humans, but who, as immortals, were not bound by the human condition. Far from being omnipotent, each had limited powers: even the sovereign, Zeus/Jupiter, shared control of the universe with his brothers Poseidon/Neptune (the sea) and Hades/Pluto (the underworld). Lacking a creed or anything like an organised church, ancient paganism was open to continual reinterpretation, with the result that we should not expect to find figures with a uniform essence. It is common to begin accounts of the pantheon with a list of the major gods and their function(s) (Hephaistos/Vulcan: craft; Aphrodite/Venus: love; and Artemis/Diana: the hunt and so on), but few are this straightforward. Aphrodite, for example, is much more than the goddess of love, vital though that function is. Her epithets include *Hetaira* ('courtesan') and *Porne* ('prostitute'), but also attest roles as varied as patron of the citizen body (*Pandemos*: 'of all the people') and protectress of seafaring (*Euploia*, *Pontia*, *Limenia*).

Recognising this diversity, the series consists not of biographies of each god or hero (though such have been attempted in the past), but of investigations into their multifaceted aspects within the complex world of ancient paganism. Its approach has been shaped partly in response to two distinctive patterns in previous research. Until the middle of the twentieth century, scholarship largely took the form of studies of individual gods and heroes. Many works presented a detailed appraisal of such issues as each figure's origins, myth and cult; these include L.R. Farnell's examination of major deities in his *Cults*

of the Greek States (5 vols, Oxford, 1896–1909) and A.B. Cook's huge three-volume *Zeus* (Cambridge, 1914–40). Others applied theoretical developments to the study of gods and heroes, notably (and in the closest existing works to a uniform series) K. Kerényi in his investigations of gods as Jungian archetypes, including *Prometheus: archetypal image of human existence* (English trans. London 1963) and *Dionysos: archetypal image of the indestructable life* (English trans. London 1976).

In contrast, under the influence of French structuralism, the later part of the century saw a deliberate shift away from research into particular gods and heroes towards an investigation of the system of which they were part. Fuelled by a conviction that the study of isolated gods could not do justice to the dynamics of ancient religion, the pantheon came to be represented as a logical and coherent network in which the various powers were systematically opposed to one another. In a classic study by J.-P. Vernant, for example, the Greek concept of space was shown to be consecrated through the opposition between Hestia (goddess of the hearth – fixed space) and Hermes (messenger and traveller god – moveable space: Vernant, *Myth and Thought Among the Greeks*, London, 1983, 127–75). The gods as individual entities were far from neglected however, as may be exemplified by the works by Vernant, and his colleague M. Detienne, on particular deities including Artemis, Dionysos and Apollo: see, most recently, Detienne's *Apollon, le couteau en main: une approche expérimentale du polythéisme grec* (Paris, 1998).

In a sense, this series is seeking a middle ground. While approaching its subjects as unique (if diverse) individuals, it pays attention to their significance as powers within the collectivity of religious beings. *Gods and Heroes of the Ancient World* sheds new light on many of the most important religious beings of classical antiquity; it also provides a route into understanding Greek and Roman polytheism in the twenty-first century.

The series is intended to interest the general reader as well as being geared to the needs of students in a wide range of fields from Greek and Roman religion and mythology, classical literature and anthropology, to Renaissance literature and cultural studies. Each book presents an authoritative, accessible and refreshing account of

its subject via three main sections. The introduction brings out what it is about the god or hero that merits particular attention. This is followed by a central section which introduces key themes and ideas, including (to varying degrees) origins, myth, cult and representations in literature and art. Recognising that the heritage of myth is a crucial factor in its continued appeal, the reception of each figure since antiquity forms the subject of the third part of the book. The volumes include illustrations of each god/hero and where appropriate time charts, family trees and maps. An annotated bibliography synthesises past research and indicates useful follow-up reading.

For convenience, the masculine terms 'gods' and 'heroes' have been selected for the series title, although (and with an apology for the male-dominated language), the choice partly reflects ancient usage in that the Greek *theos* ('god') is used of goddesses too. For convenience and consistency, Greek spellings are used for ancient names, except for famous Latinised exceptions, and BC/AD has been selected rather than BCE/CE.

I am indebted to Catherine Bousfield, the editorial assistant until 2004, who (literally) dreamt up the series and whose thoroughness and motivation brought it close to its launch. The hard work and efficiency of her successor, Matthew Gibbons, has overseen its progress to publication, and the classics editor of Routledge, Richard Stoneman, has provided support and expertise throughout. The anonymous readers for each proposal gave frank and helpful advice, while the authors' commitment to advancing scholarship while producing accessible accounts of their designated subjects has made it a pleasure to work with them.

Susan Deacy, Roehampton University, June 2005

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PREFACE

What could be easier to write, for someone who has spent his working life in Greek religion and mythology, than a short book on Zeus aimed at a broad but discriminating readership? The answer is 'almost anything'. There is no knowledge of Zeus without confronting the detail of myth and literature, and getting a real sense of the place of the art or without taking seriously what it was to worship, revere and respect this greatest of Greek gods. There are no halfway houses – Intermediate Zeus is impossible.

There has been a lot to tell and I apologise in advance if some of it is tough going. We are after all sweeping through a history from the Indo-European peoples whom we can dimly sense worshipping their god *Dyēus pətēr* in the fourth millennium BC to the cute names that software engineers adopt in order to market abstrusely powerful computing 'solutions' as our third millennium AD begins. In between, among the Greeks the worship of Zeus was universal, but locally modulated and infinitely rich: it matters what they did in Boeotia at the Great Daidala every fifty-ninth year or at the feast of grim Zeus Laphystios. It matters too how Zeus spread to nations newly arrived in the world of accredited Greek culture, or Romans who wanted to think about the real Jupiter, or Syrians worshipping Baal. So a sense of geography and chronology, indeed of the unfurling map of history, is unavoidable.

In writing on myth once, I commented how there is no right order in which to present such material. At best one achieves a rhetorical success. This book has been specially difficult and I have written it at

least three times in different orders. I will be happy if readers feel that the book conveys a sense of the onward march of history whilst grouping themes as though it were giving a synchronic account, an overview, of how Zeus fitted together, aspect by aspect, at a given time.

Writing this sort of book requires a wide expertise, wider than any of us has. I am aware of many of my weaknesses and wish I could have given more attention particularly to iconography and to archaeology. But with the best will in the world I would not surrender a single page of this book to make room. I believe in the authentic voice of people of long ago, whether in Greek and Roman times or in medieval times (and I believe in letting them speak for themselves). It is a miracle that we have their literature after so long and can come so close to recreating their worlds and concerns. Some of this material becomes highbrow; but much too is what today we would call folk culture. It is a whole world, down to the very swear words they used.

All nations deserve respect. But the ancient Greeks have to be rescued from many evils – for instance the dying breed who would idealise all Greeks, or the trivialisers who treat them as people of fantasy, fit for computer games, role play and mindless notching up of the mythology. The Greeks were a people, like any other people today, and the peculiar tensions of their societies catalysed cultural phenomena to which we owe much in the European, and human, tradition. Their religion, however, thanks to our Christian history, has been treated as an interesting collection of customs with no inner content. I do not personally subscribe to the inner content of any religion. But if a religion thinks it reaches out for something other, something categorically different and beyond human understanding – and that is what religions on their own account do – then the religion of Zeus strove harder than most. The Greeks were not going through humanist motions, but were committed to their gods and their supreme god. Let this book be a bloodless offering to him!

This is also an offering to those who have been so kind to me in putting this book together. Illustrations have been a particular nightmare and

key interventions, often beyond the call of duty, by European friends of culture in Bologna, St Petersburg, Rome, Berlin, Heidelberg, Paris and Glasgow have meant a lot to me. I am also grateful to anonymous readers (particularly at the design stage) and to Susan Deacy and Catherine Bousfield for their patience and constructive criticisms, to Geraldine Martin for her unflappability in resolving issues raised at the production stage, to my son James Dowden for heroic and speedy work on the indexes, and to Ken and Diana Wardle for corrections, practical help and sufficient wine.

The University of Birmingham
Christmas Eve 2004

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

This table is designed to help you follow this sequence of events and periods. Please be aware that I have had to make some arbitrary decisions about when periods begin and end, and about when events, particularly earlier ones, took place. Any uncertain date for an event is in italics.

Period	*Year*	*Event*
Before the Greeks 3500–2100 BC	*3500*	Final break-up of Indo-European language and society
Bronze Age (*Minoan* in Crete, *Mycenaean* in Greece) 2100–1200 BC	*1200*	Zeus at Knossos and Pylos
Dark Age 1200–776 BC	*800/700*	End of kingship in most of Greece
Archaic Age 776–480 BC	776	(allegedly) the first Olympic Games
	700	Hesiod, *Theogony* and *Works and Days*
	700/650	Homer, *Iliad* and *Odyssey*
	630	Mimnermos' poetry
	600	Alcaeus' poetry
	546–510	Tyranny at Athens (Peisistratids)
Classical Age 480–323 BC	480/479	Greeks defeat Xerxes (King of Persia)
	484–456	plays of Aeschylus

Period	*Year*	*Event*
	441–406	plays of Euripides
	435	Pheidias' statue of Zeus enthroned
	429–347	Plato
	384–322	Aristotle
	339–314	Xenokrates head of the Academy
Hellenistic Age (Greece) 323–31 BC	323	death of Alexander the Great
	335–263	Zeno (founder of Stoicism)
Republic (Rome) *509*–31 BC	*300*	Euhemeros
	280–250	poetry of Aratus
	331–232	Cleanthes (Stoic)
	204–169	poetry and plays of Ennius
	47 BC	Varro's *Human and Divine Antiquities*
Empire, whilst pagan 31 BC–AD 312	*29*–19 BC	Vergil's *Aeneid*
	by AD 8	Ovid's *Metamorphoses*
	60s	Cornutus' *Compendium of Greek Mythology*
	117–138	Hadrian emperor
	150	Pausanias' *Guide to Greece*
	190–230	writings of Tertullian
Empire, whilst Christian; Late Antiquity 312–567	312–337	Constantine emperor
	391/2	Theodosius bans pagan cult
	393	last Olympic Games
	426	Augustine's *City of God*
	420–450	writings of Macrobius and of Martianus Capella
	470	Fulgentius', *Mythologiae*
	475	Pheidias' Zeus destroyed in fire at Constantinople
Middle Ages 567–1453	*600*–636	Isidore Bishop of Seville
	1200	Carmina Burana
	1321	Dante's *Divine Comedy*
	1360	Boccaccio's *Genealogies of the Pagan Gods*
	1380	Chaucer's *House of Fame*

Period	*Year*	*Event*
Renaissance 1453–1600	1470s	printed editions of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*
	1499?–1546	Giulio Romano, painter
	1545	Titian's *Danae* (Naples)
	1550	Fontainebleau mythological scenes (the court of Henri II of France is the New Olympus)
Modern 1600–2005	1744	Handel's *Semele*
	1876	Wagner's *Ring of the Nibelungs* first performed complete

Map 1 The regions of mainland Greece

WHY ZEUS?

INTRODUCING ZEUS

Zeus, king of the Greek gods, master of lightning, smiter of those who offend him, god of the sky who rules on Mt Olympus. Zeus the superlative: *kydistos*, *megistos*, *hypatos* – most glorious, most great, most supreme. Father of men and of gods, he sees all, he plans all. We cannot and may not understand his mind, but *nothing comes to fulfilment without Zeus*, as the Elders in Aeschylus' tragedy, *Agamemnon* (1487), intone.

Dare we think that Zeus still exists? Polytheists, people who believe in many gods, should have no problem thinking of him as an additional god or simply the Greek name for a key god of their own. For monotheists, why should he not be a way of talking about, a way of approaching, the one God? He is after all that single planning force that gives sense to Greek polytheism.

Yet to us Zeus is mere fiction: colourful, lustful, mighty and irresponsible. We know him from modern paintings, books of ancient art, sometimes the real thing in museums and from a mythology of his adulteries. How could the Greeks have worshipped such an empty god? Zeus rained, their crops grew. Zeus thundered, he was angry. A battle was lost, they had not sacrificed enough. A battle was won, they dedicated a trophy to Zeus Tropaios. Was that all?

From beginning to end Zeus has been unseen, operating the causal system of the universe in mysterious ways, and underlying every event. From the beginnings of Western literature in the works of Homer, he is a strange and remote force focused on our world and causing it to be as it is. The universe displays the justice of Zeus. And it is tough

justice. Neither Homer nor the tragedians nor the philosophers thought they had his measure. Even a philosopher, Cleanthes the Stoic, might compose a hymn to him as he struggled to grasp something of Zeus's place in, or rather slightly outside, our world – in the ether somehow. The mythology was only a way of talking about Zeus, a *façon de parler*. No one believed that the gods actually had a palace at the top of a mountain in Thessaly. Mythology was always a parable, a transposition of the mysterious into another language. If the Greeks often treated their myth with a sense of fun that might shock generations brought up on scripture and holy books, that was at least partly because they did not take it quite so literally or naively. Ancient Greeks were no less sophisticated than ourselves.

THE EVIDENCE FOR ZEUS

We know about Zeus from myth, from cult and from art. The three fuse together to form the Zeus that Greeks constructed in their imaginations and revered. *Myth* wraps religious sites in an ambience of gods and heroes, and presents the origins in the past of current religious life. It is told from childhood onwards, forms the subject of performances – whether epic, drama or hymns danced out – and is at the core of ancient education and life. *Cult* is the unceasing recognition of the supremacy of the gods and our dependence on them: it embraces the home, the city and its countryside, and defines what it is to be Greek. Time itself is created by the rhythm of the festivals during the year, the spans of years between, for instance, Olympic festivals, and the ceremonies that highlight life stages, from birth to death. *Art* gives visible shape and its own sense to the ideas we have of the gods and to their mythology; it does much more than decorate temples and shrines: it is a vehicle for religious ideas to penetrate the whole world.

The mythology

Zeus is born, usually in Crete. He escapes being swallowed by his father Kronos when his mother Rhea puts a stone in his place. Meanwhile his baby cries are hidden by the noisy dancing of young warriors, the Kouretes (Curetes). He is looked after, alternatively, by Amaltheia the goat (or nymph) or the Kouretes. Kronos is bound and confined. An attempted counter-revolution by the Titans (who comprise Kronos and his generation) is defeated. This is the *Titanomachy*. The Titans are imprisoned in Tartarus. There are some more battles to make Zeus's authority absolute: sometimes a *Gigantomachy* (fight with the Gigantes, the Giants), and sometimes a battle with the deadly monster and enemy Typhon. He comes close to defeat in this battle.

His rule is now complete. When Prometheus steals fire from the immortals, Zeus has him chained to the Caucasus mountains and his liver is savaged by an eagle until Herakles (Hercules) shoots it – a sample of the order of Zeus.

He is married to Hera and it is cult more than myth that tells of his 'sacred marriage' with her (p. 31). But most of his children, of which there are many, are begotten in relationships with other women, who form a mighty list (p. 39) and constitute the larger part of his mythology. Semele foolishly prays for him to appear in his true form, which turns out to be the lightning bolt. Unlike other gods he has no human shape in which to appear and therefore, usefully for stories, can only appear in disguise, or transformed. So, to Alkmene, mother of Herakles, he appears as her husband Amphitryon; to Danae, mother of Perseus, as a shower of golden rain; to Leda, mother of Helen and the Dioskouroi, as a swan; to Europa as a bull. He also sends his eagle for Ganymede, a Trojan prince of exceptional beauty, so that he may be his cup-bearer in heaven.

He also dies, according to the Cretans. But that is an outrageous story that gave the Cretans the reputation for being liars (p. 35).

These are the stories. In the first part, 'key themes', we will see what some of them have meant, or seemed to have meant, to the Greeks. The myths are always for thinking with, and, as the Greek world expands, become a defining part of the prestigious Greek – and later Roman – culture which would eventually be adopted by new

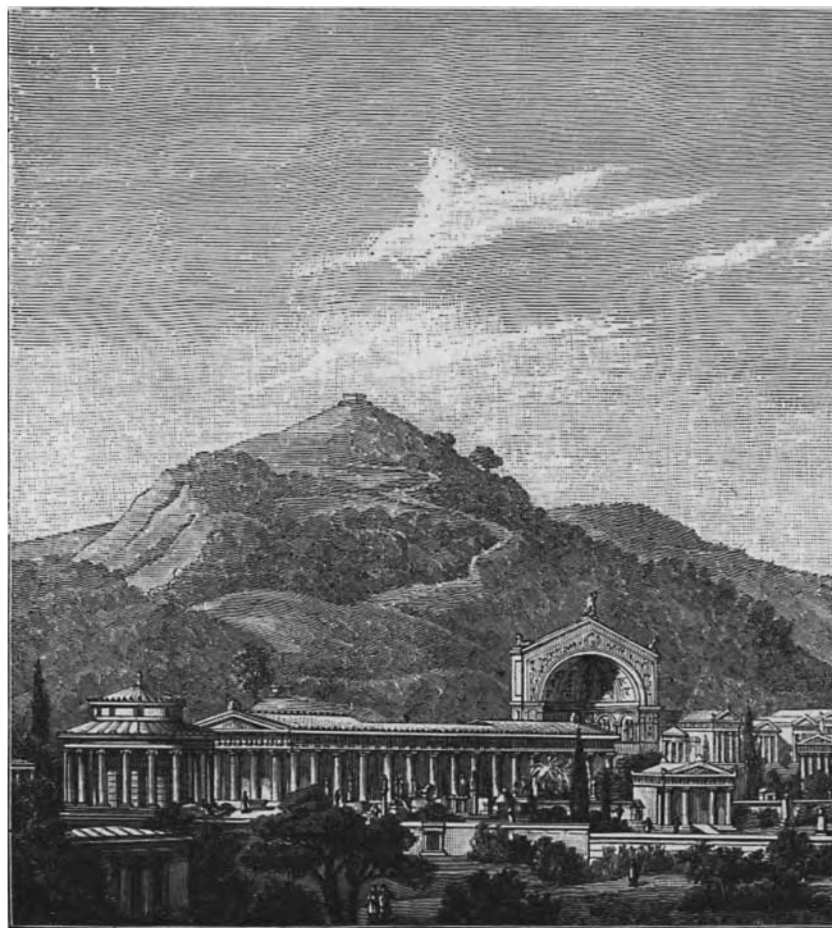
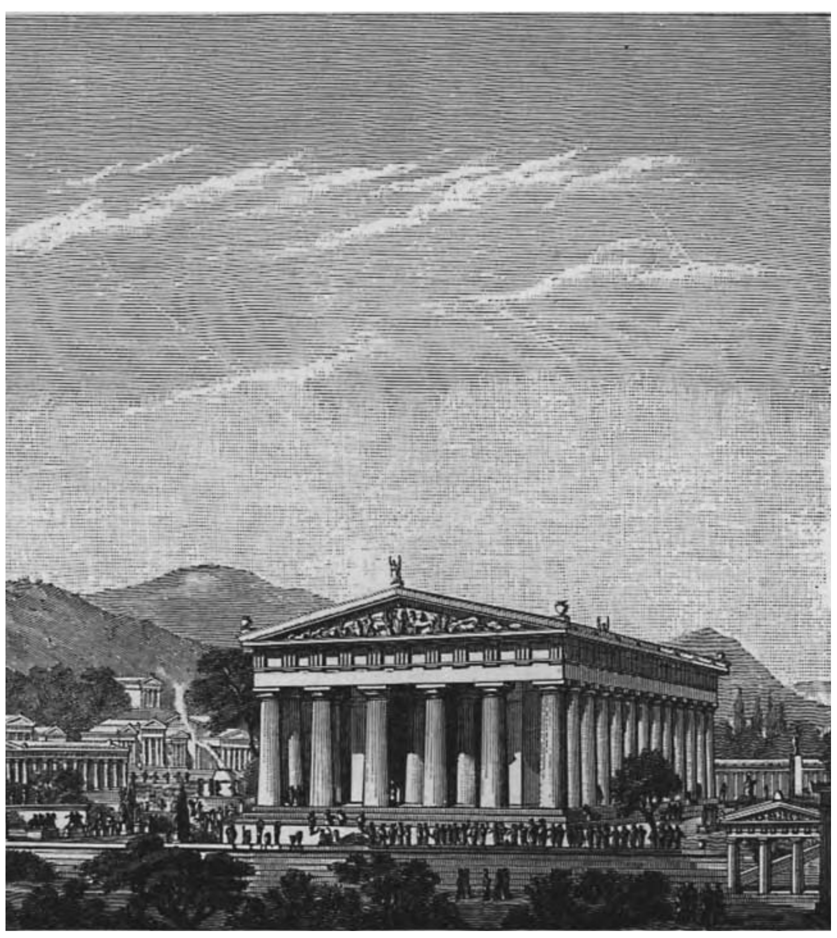


Figure 1 The sanctuary of Zeus at Olympia, as imagined in a nineteenth-century engraving.

civilisations. This mythological portrait also becomes an ideological reference point: Zeus helps us think about kings and their roles, about emperors, about life and the rules of the universe that govern it. In the European tradition too, the subject of the second part, 'Zeus afterwards', the myths have their meaning: the world of myth does not divide into authentic ancient times on the one hand and later European manipulation on the other.



The cult

Zeus is the most widespread Greek god, and Greeks worshipped him in many different ways. At one extreme the head of household is praying in his courtyard, hands uplifted to heaven as the altar blazes with a few sticks. At the other extreme it is the time of the Olympic Festival, held every four years, at Olympia in the Peloponnese, and half the Greek world, and more besides, seems to be there. Something between the Vatican City in the jubilee year and huge Hindu festivals

like the Kumbh Mela, you would have seen a sizeable apparatus of priests, officials, hostels, treasuries, sporting events, statues of victors and, in the middle, the great temples of Zeus and of Hera. On a more humble scale, a procession winds up a mountain, perhaps in Arcadia, Crete or Macedonia, to offer traditional gifts, to pray for rain or simply to recognise his supreme power. And now, in the little village of Erchia in the territory of Athens, it is the 4th of Thargelion, time for the people to go up their local hill, the *pagos*, and offer Zeus a sheep.

Regardless of whether Zeus is your city's patron god, he is continually worshipped at every level and your dependence on him is constantly acknowledged by the humility of ritual and the slaughter of animals.

The image

It was the job of sculpture and painting to capture the god and his meaning and to provide a visible focus for thinking about the god and adoring him. The first task was to provide a cult image, a statue which in past times was often wooden and rather notional ('crude' according to evolutionary prejudice). These often remained the most powerful in religious terms. Later, it was the custom to make statues out of stone or bronze and these became more lifelike in the sense that they looked more exactly like people; they were 'anthropomorphic'. Pheidias' great statue of Zeus at Olympia was 'chryselephantine' – *gold and ivory* were applied around a central wooden core to create the pale skin and contrasts such as hair and rich clothing. These then served as a focus for worship and contemplation. But temples also came to be decorated with scenes from the mythology and you might find the god on metopes that filled the gaps between the stone representations of the ends of roof joists, on the body of the temple behind the colonnade and, of course, on the pediment. You might also find free-standing statues of Zeus at any religious site.

Greek painting is largely lost to us, and it is impossible to know whether there were striking images of Zeus on the interiors of temples or public buildings. His stories certainly appear on pottery, which derived much of its inspiration from painting. At mealtimes and at drinking parties, and in all domestic and ceremonial contexts,

vase-painting would have provided another way, beyond the epic and tragic texts that Greeks met in education and in performance, for images of Zeus and his mythology to be constantly at hand.

The omnipresence of Zeus – portrayed, talked about, thought about, worshipped – cannot be exaggerated. And the physical representation, as is typical of Christian and Hindu art and life, forms a necessary anchor. It is deeply revealing that in the Middle Ages, when Zeus was no longer seen in art, the book of Albricus had to be written to describe the appearance of the ancient gods (p. 124).

EXPLAINING ZEUS

In our modern world it is hard to grasp Zeus. And we should not underestimate the influence that writers since the nineteenth century have had on our ideas, for better and for worse. If we set down some of these ideas now, we may be able to stand back from them when we need to and recognise disembodied echoes of these views in modern writing about the god.

Playing with words: the name 'Zeus'

Can his name give us any information? 'Zeus' is an unusual case because it is actually relatively clear where it comes from, unlike the names of the other Greek gods. In 1786 it was discovered that Greek was part of a family of related languages. Our word 'three' looks like the Greek *treis* or the Sanskrit *trayaḥ* or the Latin *tres* because it *is* the same word. Likewise, the 'Tue' in Tuesday is the same as *Zeus* or *Dyāuḥ* or *Ju*-piter (Greeks called on 'Zeus father', *Zeu pater*, as well): Tuesday for us is Zeus's day. These words can be traced back to common linguistic ancestors, the 'Proto-Indo-Europeans', who perhaps lived north of the Black Sea, around 3500 BC. Their **Dyēus* belonged to a group of words that led to:

- *dies*, the Latin word for 'day' (the English word is actually unrelated);

- the Greek adjective *endios*, referring to a peak time of day usually envisaged as midday;
- the Greek adjective *eudios*, referring to good weather as opposed to storm;
- many Sanskrit words built on the root *div-* referring to heaven, shining and day.

This is fascinating: we have in some way recovered an ancestral god of the Indo-European peoples, a named god in what was presumably a polytheistic system and the senior ('father') god at that. All Greeks have this god because he was there at the beginning before there were any separate Greeks. His role appears to be based in nature, expressing the brightness of the sky – and the disruptions of that sky by rain, storm and lightning – an elemental feature in human experience. Even if Zeus does not *mean* 'sky', he is so entwined with it that Greeks can say that 'Zeus rains' (p. 54) and attribute atmospheric phenomena to him.[1]

But we should control our enthusiasm: however scientific and pragmatic this link may seem, its significance is in fact quite limited. **Dyēus* does not tell us about the Zeus that ancient Greeks worshipped, happily ignorant of Indo-European etymology. For that we need facts about the Greeks, their systems and structures of thought. Classical Greek religion is the product of two millennia of change since Indo-European times. Wherever **Dyēus*- or Zeus-worshippers migrated, they found new Zeuses around them and, as they also identified this or that god as 'Zeus', so the identity of Zeus changed and had to form part of a new system. The cultures that preceded the Greeks in Greece contributed to every aspect of the lives of the new, merged, population. It is for this reason that so many of the gods of Greece cannot be etymologically linked with Indo-European, and it may also help explain why there were so many female gods dominating Greek cities. When we come to look at Zeus's cults we will find them very varied: we can thank poets and thinkers for swinging the pendulum back and seeking to restore unity to a god named Zeus.

Despite the efforts of poets, however, the variety is still visible. So, Zeus in Crete absorbed the cult of a divine child, guarded in mythology by the young warrior Kouretes. This god was one who could die. At

Dodona (Epirus) his wife is Dione rather than the usual Hera. His children should be the 'youths of Zeus', the Dioskouroi (p. 44) Castor and Pollux, but his parenthood is not at the forefront of their mythology. He may indeed have been 'father of gods and men' in Indo-European times – this description is found at least in both Greek and Sanskrit. But the development of an organised family of gods, preferably 12, for him to preside over looks more like the mythologies of the Near-Eastern cultures with which the Greeks came into contact and from which they got this idea. Indeed, but for the additional employment provided for him by this Near-Eastern model he might have found it harder to survive; the Sanskrit Dyāuḥ and the proto-German *Tiwaz have almost faded away: we can say something about Woden whose name survives in the word 'Wednesday', but what can we say of the god of Tuesday? Zeus has derived more vigour from the young, violent and successful storm god found in various Near-Eastern cultures.

Nature and evolution

> All personal gods come from nature gods
>
> Welcker, *Griechische Götterlehre* i.324 (1857)

> [The Greek people] very soon progressed to secure personification and complete anthropomorphism of the gods
>
> Preller, *Griechische Mythologie* i.2 (1854)

Indo-European etymology was an early nineteenth-century enthusiasm. So were Nature and Evolution. Nature, which had bubbled to the surface in Romantic poetry in the first half of the nineteenth century, seemed important to scholars too: many of the forms of experience characteristic of earlier civilisations had resulted, they thought, from the religious way in which man stood in awe of nature. Evolution is something we most readily associate with the theories of Darwin and the emergence of *Homo sapiens*, but it went far beyond these. Language, as we have seen, had been found to have evolved till we had the privileged languages of Western Europe. Indeed, not just

man but his whole civilisation evolved. Stages in this evolution could be seen in its relics in modern times – in the 'primitives' and 'savages' that Empire existed to colonise, who, frozen in time, contrasted starkly with the life of the mind practised by the scholars of the great European universities.

Ideas such as these were in the air as A.B. Cook wrote what is still the single most monumental book on Zeus, in three heavy, diffuse volumes. He wrote the preface to the first volume on 22 July 1914, around three weeks after the assassination of the Archduke Ferdinand and within days of the outbreak of the First World War. So it was that Cook originally looked for 'The European Sky God' (Cook 1914: i.xii) until he was advised by Farnell in Oxford that 'the unity of an ancient god consisted less in his nature than in his name' (ibid.: i.xii), thus privileging study of the history of words. This did not, however, stop Cook from tracing 'the evolution of Zeus from Sky to Sky-God' and seeking 'to determine the relations in which he stood to the solar, lunar, and stellar cults of the Mediterranean basin' (ibid.: i.xiii).

So, Cook's Zeus, as a person, an anthropomorphic god, was the product of a three-stage evolution 'in which the feelings, the will, and the intellect played successively the principal part' (ibid.: i.13f.):

1. *feelings*: 'the awe felt by early man as he regarded the live azure [Cook means the sky] above him';
2. *expression of will* 'when the community was parched with drought and the magician by his own passionate self-projection made the rushing rain-storm to satisfy the thirst of man and beast';
3. *the work of intellect*, 'expressing heaven in terms of earth', and leading to 'the clear-cut form and fashion of the weather-ruling king'.

This vision of man's progress is presented as a modification of the formula which Frazer had recently used in the second edition of his colossal *Golden Bough* in struggling to give belated sense to the mountains of evidence he had collected, tracing an evolution in man's dependence from magic to religion to science. Rather contrary to Frazer's ideas was the sense which prevailed in a religious country such as England then was that Christianity was itself the destined

outcome of the evolution of the religious mentality. This appears very frequently, usually in suppressed form, in classical scholarship and it can be seen at work in Cook's belief that this evolution of Zeus led to 'nothing less than the rise of faith in a personal God, the Ruler and Father of all' (1914: i.9). Faith and personal gods had nothing to do with Greek religion, but a lot to do with Christianity.

Gathering the facts – the empirical approach

Cook had probably not understood Farnell's advice very well. Farnell, back in 1896, had published the first volume of *The Cults of the Greek States*, including chapters on Zeus. His approach was generally much more factual and much less speculative than Cook's – which is one reason why, over a century later, these volumes are still useful. 'The main scope', he wrote, 'of the present work is not the question of origin, but a survey of the most important texts and monuments that express the actual religious conceptions of the various Greek communities at different historical epochs' (1896: i.1). He collected data more than he theorised, though the categories into which the data falls do give something away. He explicitly rejected the theoretical basis on which other scholars were working, namely 'the view that the myths are allegorical accounts of physical phenomena, and the mythic figures are the personification of the elements and the powers of nature' (ibid.: i.3), because, 'as applied to the origins of Greek religion and the explanation of its development, the theory has produced only inconsequence and confusion'.

Even Farnell, however, was not immune to the evolutionary environment of those times: 'we can distinguish the more primitive from the more advanced stages of the cult, if we accept the most probable hypothesis that the physical aspect of the god is the earlier, and that the savage character which is preserved in cults and myths is prior to the more moral and spiritual' (ibid.: i.36).

Viewed from a different perspective, Farnell can be seen as part of a long-drawn movement away from myth towards ritual and cult practice. This reflects the characteristic evidence of scholars: we move from a world where the prime material was creative literature

– prose or poetry, read by people who were sensitive to it – away to a different world where the prime material was found by archaeologists, ethnologists and those who, in effect, quarried in literature. This tendency is already apparent in the privileging of folk practices in Mannhardt's *Wald- und Feldkulte* ('Rituals of Wood and Field', 1st edn 1875/7).[2] Similarly Frazer, in his *Golden Bough* (1st edn 1890), is initially heavily dependant on Mannhardt but progressively he embroiders his work with the spurious evolutionary patterning which we have seen above. But it reached definitive expression in the replacement of the standard volumes on Greek religion in the German *Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft* ('Handbook of Antiquity'), which Otto Gruppe had written under the title *Griechische Mythologie und Religionsgeschichte* ('History of Greek Religion and Mythology', 1906), by Martin Nilsson's more conservative and empirical *Geschichte der griechischen Religion* ('History of Greek Religion', 1st edn, i. 1941, ii. 1950). Cult and the facts about cult were now what mattered above all. Mythology was a distraction which could not be scientifically related to the real facts of cult.

Specialism and the art of interpretation

As the mountain of data grows, it becomes harder and harder to get a clear idea of Zeus, particularly if one must now abandon Victorian ideas like nature and evolution as a means of patterning the information. Already when reading Cook, reviewers thought it was hard to see the forest for the trees, though Cook was quite insistent on Zeus the Sky God leading men's thought on the upward path of religious evolution.

One antidote to the data mountain is to write studies that look at some particular aspect of Zeus. To mention a few examples: in 1931, a pupil of Nilsson's, H. Sjövall, wrote a book, *Zeus im altgriechischen Hauskult*, on Zeus in household cult; in 1981, H. Verbruggen did a study of Zeus in Crete, *Le Zeus crétois*; and in 1990 K.W. Arafat looked at Zeus on Athenian red-figure vases.[3] But we learn more about the god and the Greek thought-world from the splendidly trenchant and faithfully grim volume of Hugh Lloyd-Jones on *The Justice of Zeus* (1971).

At another extreme, critical and scientific standards in the humanities have led to the creation of huge databanks. The encyclopedia to end all encyclopedias is the revision of A. Pauly's *Realencyclopaedie der Altertumswissenschaft* (in a mere six volumes by 1866), begun in 1894 by G. Wissowa and completed in 1980 (in 85 volumes). One part of Schwabl's splendid entry on Zeus appeared in 1972, listing every epithet and appellation, and the other in 1978, presenting a huge survey of the evidence in literature and art. In a comparable encyclopedic vein are the articles in the *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae* on Zeus (in vol. 8, 1997) that collect and classify every single instance of Zeus's representation in Greek, Etruscan, Roman and more marginal art. This work has been fundamental in helping us to find our way around heroes and gods in ancient art, and, like Farnell, it will be lastingly useful because it gives us the facts as straight as it can.

It is much rarer to try to grasp the essence of the god that underlies these manifestations. Something like this was attempted by C. Kerényi in his *Zeus and Hera: archetypal image of father, husband and wife* (1976 – the German original dates from 1972). Kerényi, who at times worked closely with C.J. Jung, looked for the psychological wellsprings of Zeus and Hera and the way in which the archetypes deep within human nature condition the creation of myth and indeed all our ideas. It would have been an impressive approach if it had worked.

A different story begins with W.F. Otto, who wrote enthused books crystallising the distinctive nature of various Greek gods, giving the impression he even believed in them. Though he seemed idiosyncratic in the 1930s, his work has been a lasting inspiration for those who want to look beneath the surface and understand the credibility, and raw power, of Greek gods. Through his occasional scattered comments on Zeus in *The Homeric Gods: the spiritual significance of Greek religion* (1929, English translation 1954) we gain an inkling of Zeus's transcendent, all-encompassing, indescribable power. This points the way towards two final scholars.

J.-P. Vernant has not written a book on Zeus, but he has helped us to understand the god and the system of Greek religion. He has sought to detect the underlying patterns of thought that gain expression in mythology and religion, such as that of Zeus. Characteristically

he has taken a particular interest in the thoughtful mythmaking of Hesiod (around 700 BC). Here we find ourselves looking at the special intelligence of Zeus, his *metis*, at his consequent relationship to Athene, the goddess of wisdom who springs from his head, and at Prometheus who challenges his world order by empowering man through the gift of fire. Vernant has also emphasised how gods such as Zeus offer ways of categorising and dividing up the world. If he is closely associated with the sky, its lightness and its darkness, then that is because it is a vehicle by which his special overwhelming power becomes apparent to us. What matters is not that he is a sky god but that he is a particular type of power (Vernant 1982: 95).

Books on Greek religion usually include a (not always insightful) chapter on Zeus. But one work has proved definitive in modern times and speaks for a generation: Walter Burkert's *Greek Religion: archaic and classical* (1985, first published in German in 1977). Sheer power and supremacy – a vision so close to Otto's and Vernant's – drive Burkert's Zeus forward through every manifestation: 'all sovereignty among men proceeds from Zeus . . . Zeus stands above all faction . . . Zeus is therefore uniquely qualified to be the god of all Greeks . . . Zeus was the only god who could become an all-embracing god of the universe . . . (and for the philosophers) Zeus is the world as a whole' (Burkert 1985: 130 f.).

Unity in diversity. This is what we must now wrestle with as in a new millennium we try once more to form a portrait of the whole god and see how he has remained a force to bargain with even in modern times. He has many, widely differing manifestations. But he is not a miscellany. There is one Zeus.

OVERVIEW: FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF ZEUS

As we begin, we are faced with the following questions:

- Can we learn the nature of Zeus from the origins of his name? If not, is he only a miscellaneous product of historical accident?
- Did religious perceptions evolve from primitive awe at nature to envisaging 'the clear-cut form and fashion of the weather-ruling

king'? But if they did not, how can he embrace both a personal and an impersonal world?

- Did Zeus evolve from a god in physical shape to something higher, and did Greeks advance from primitive cults and myths to 'the more moral and spiritual'? But can a 'higher' god not be envisaged in a physical shape?
- Should we set aside all this myth and nature material and look instead at his worship in all its diversity, for instance collecting and sorting his cult names? But what conclusions will we reach and how can the mythology be irrelevant to Greek religion?
- Have we now passed the point where we can, or would wish to, reach a deeper understanding of Zeus? Or can we still grasp him through the psychology underlying how he is depicted, or through some intuitive grasp of his transcendent power?

A final word on some of these competing ideas. First, cult. If you want to say that any one aspect of Zeus is more important than the others, maybe you should indeed choose the cult. The cult is what Greeks did, both privately and publicly. It is how they performed Zeus and how they dramatised their relationship to this awesome power. Without the cult, they would have a Zeus no different from ours. But at the same time, the cult is part of a larger text: it speaks a ritual language and draws together occasions and needs, but there are other languages. One is the language of myth and of poetry. Another is the language of sculpture and painting that surrounded Greeks in their day-to-day lives. Yet another is the language of philosophy, which wrestled with the language of myth and poetry and finally reached an understanding through allegory, because they needed to make sense of the traditional myths and of the poets whom they rightly valued. Alongside this is the lost language of ordinary people, who will have picked up elements of these other languages, absorbed the art and watched the ritual and often performed it. As we can see from fragments of their language, they will have talked piously of the 'rain of Zeus' and would vigorously have cursed by him. All these ideas and performances swirled round the Greeks as they worshipped Zeus, and gave a depth of meaning to their activity.

Second, the division of Zeus. A key to understanding Zeus is that he is at once a weather god, that is a god who looks after a particular function in nature, and the ultimate god, who is cause of everything. This is entirely intelligible and widely paralleled, because the sky from which weather comes is, quite simply, above us and everywhere. There is no need to trace an evolution from a weather god to a supreme god – all that does is to work out the logical connections between the two (which we do below in 'Zeus from Weather to Fate'), or worse to separate out the constituent elements of his supremacy. The images of the thunderbolt and sceptre do all the work that is necessary to hold these two aspects together.

Third, Zeus is also *part of a system*[4] at any one time: he relates to all other ideas and pictures that people have about their lives and to all the other gods. It is from the totality of gods, not just from one of them, that we develop a science or theology of the universe. Zeus, however, underpins that system and in a sense is the only god that is totally indispensable. His character is therefore special: he is remote, invisible and inscrutable. Greek pagans were religious too.

KEY THEMES

1

ENVISAGING ZEUS

You recognise gods by their attributes. In the case of Zeus this means above all the thunderbolt that he wields, causing the flash of lightning, the sound of thunder and the impact as it strikes. Lightning can be recognised in art by its double lotus shape (see figs 5, 6, 8). This is based originally on Near-Eastern art, which had depicted a fork of lightning – sometimes doubled. But it was imported into Greece as part of a repertoire of ornamental motifs and in the process was beautifully transmuted into a double lotus flower. Zeus is already holding the thunderbolt in Homer's *Iliad*:

> Then it was that the father of men and gods
> was seated upon the peaks of Ida with its springs
> having come down from the sky; and he was holding the
> lightning in his hands.
>
> *Iliad* 11.182–4

Sitting down is not a matter of convenience but one of status: it is majestic to sit, and both gods and kings sit on a *thronos*, a chair indicating their status. Around 650 BC Homer conjured up a vivid picture of Zeus enthroned with thunderbolt and thus foreshadowed the development of Western art. He captured the spirit of Zeus in a way that set an agenda for sculptors, who by the nature of their art must wrestle with freeze-frame moments. This was the Zeus that dominated the centre of the east pediment of the Parthenon.

Another distinctive thing about Homer's Zeus is that he is *aigiochos*, which later Greeks thought meant 'he who holds the *aigis*', where the

aigis (*aegis*) is a shield made with goatskin. It is not exactly clear why he should have this attribute in particular – and indeed the word should strictly mean 'riding a goat'![1] Nevertheless, this goatskin shield is good for raising storms (some writers even use *aigis* to mean storms):

> Then Kronos' son took the *aigis* with its tassels,
> sparkling, and covered Ida over with clouds
> and, flashing lightning, he thundered mightily and shook it,
> and gave victory to the Trojans and routed the Achaeans.
>
> Homer, *Iliad* 17.593–6

There seems to be a sort of shake of the tambourine to this *aigis*, and certainly the *aigis* Athene is carrying at *Iliad* 2.448 has a hundred solid gold tassels. When Zeus is associated with animal skins, it is usually sheep- or ramskin: the *Dios kodion*, 'Zeus's fleece', was an important part of the apparatus for purification, for instance in initiation into the Eleusinian Mysteries.[2] The Golden Fleece too belonged to a ram sacrificed to Zeus and is connected with the cult of Zeus Laphystios at Halos (Thessaly). And at the time of the rising of the Dog Star, Thessalian noblemen and their sons used to go dressed in fresh ramskins to the peak of Mt Pelion – to the cave of Cheiron the Centaur and the shrine of Zeus Akraios. Perhaps in other cults, in days gone by, goats had been his cult animals. And maybe waving goatskins, not so different from clouds in appearance, had some place in the rain magic of days gone by.

In art, the earliest surviving Zeus of which we can be certain is a decorative figure on a pithos lid (LIMC 12) of around 700 BC, recognised as Zeus because of a bird in the left hand and a thunderbolt in the right. Although this is, in effect, from the time of Homer, this was perhaps not yet the standard depiction. At what became a key site, Olympia, the earlier statuettes manufactured for dedication to Zeus seem to depict a warrior god rather than the lightning god.[3] This is what we might expect of a society in the unstable times of the eighth and seventh centuries BC, just like the corresponding god, *Tiwaz, became a warrior god in unsettled Germanic cultures.

The standard Zeus results from a particular reading of the warrior god: he is increasingly seen as a wielder of lightning thanks to the

Figure 2 Zeus Keraunios. 11-cm bronze statuette of c. 480 BC, reproduced at approximately life size (National Archaeological Museum, Athens).

international (or at least inter-state) influence of epic poets with their theogonies, titanomachies and heroic poems like the *Iliad* – tales of gods being born, older gods being subdued and mortals dying. Beginning around 600 BC and going well into the fifth century, we repeatedly see the *Zeus Keraunios,* 'Zeus of the thunderbolt', especially in those 10–20-cm statuettes left by the devout at Olympia as testimony to their beliefs: here (fig. 2) Zeus strides, his right hand ready to hurl the thunderbolt (a mortal would be holding a spear), whilst his eagle perches on his left hand, an icon of supremacy in the skies. This is Zeus captured in action.

If not in action, Zeus may sit majestically on a *thronos. Zeus enthroned* is already in Homer and was soon established as an artistic type, though we must wait for the sixth century BC for undeniable depictions of this motif, when he can be seen on three clearly related black-figure cups from Laconia (fig. 3) where, dressed in a highly patterned robe, and wearing long hair and beard, his eagle swoops in to meet him.

Figure 3 Zeus enthroned. Laconian cup from Italy, *c.* 560 BC (Louvre).

We learn for instance from Pausanias that the oldest bronze statue was from the early sixth-century BC; it depicted Zeus Hypatos ('Highest') at Sparta and was made of hammered bronze plates fitted together with nails (Pausanias 3.17.6, 8.14.7; LIMC 55). What survives is obviously the tip of an iceberg. The great statues, particularly the imposing ones of Zeus enthroned, are all lost, though occasionally we pick up echoes and impressions of them on coins or through Roman reproductions.

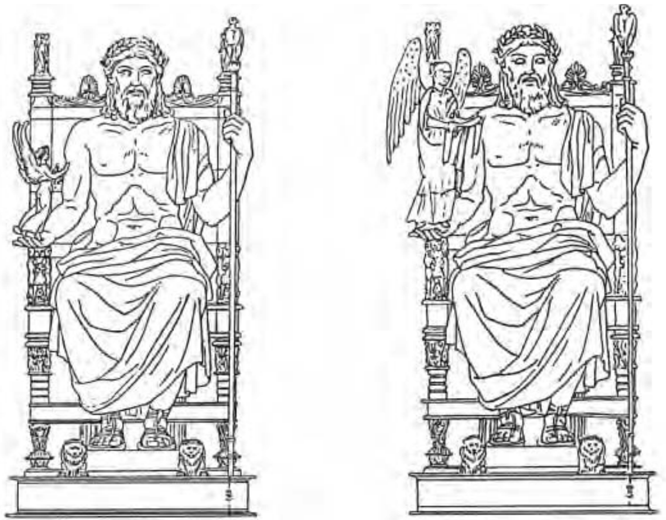


Figure 4 Zeus enthroned. Drawings reconstructing Pheidias' statue of Zeus at Olympia: with the Nike (left) life-size (drawing of F. Adler), and (right) three times life-size (drawing of W. Schiering).

The masterpiece was Pheidias' colossal statue for the temple at Olympia (fig. 4; LIMC 89). He even included a depiction of his boy-friend, Pantarkes, and wrote 'Pantarkes is beautiful' on a finger of the statue, so it is said.[4] This gives us the rough date of the statue because we know that Pantarkes won the boys' wrestling in 436 BC. The statue comes vividly to life in Pausanias's description:

> The god is sitting on a throne made of gold and ivory. A garland lies on his head, in the form of olive shoots. In his right hand he carries (a statuette of) Victory, itself too of gold and ivory, with a ribbon and a garland on the head. In the left hand of the god there is a sceptre, richly decorated with every sort of metal; and the bird sitting on the sceptre is the eagle. The god's sandals too are of gold and the robe likewise. On the robe there are embroidered animal figures and flowers, lilies. The throne is decorated with gods and precious stones, and also with ebony and ivory. And there are depictions of animals painted on it and figures worked in it. There are four Victories in the form of dancers at each foot of the throne, and two further at the base of each foot . . .
>
> Pausanias, *Tour of Greece* 5.11.1f.

With this sensational sculpture the Homeric image reaches classical fulfilment and according to the story, which I believe, Pheidias actually took Homer's poetry as his model (Dio Chrysostom 12.25). Now the lightning bolt is replaced in the Zeus-enthroned genre by the goddess Nike (Victory), whose proportions, unfortunately, we do not know. This is a modernising change, resting on a more anthropomorphic rendering of Zeus's supremacy. The goddess Nike is somehow more sophisticated than a thunderbolt and more suited to this static pose.

Thunderbolt, eagle, sceptre and now Nike – these are the attributes of Zeus by the fourth century BC. Sometimes too he holds a shallow libation-dish (*phiale*) reflecting the worship that he himself received in domestic cult. He is now more normally 'statuesque' in modern terms, and less a thunderbolt-hurler except on some coins. He has almost become more serious, in the wake of Pheidias' classical and human conception and the philosophers' demands.

Against this background, the Zeuses of the late fourth-century BC sculptor Lysippos sought atmosphere through archaism. The colossal bronze Zeus in the agora (central marketplace) at Tarentum (LIMC 224),[5] an unprecedented 40 cubits high (around 17 m), deliberately echoed those nude, striding, thunderbolt-hurling archaic statues, but presented more decorum with its *himation* (cloak) and an eagle on a column to provide both literal and metaphorical stability (LIMC 8.1, p. 344). The statues he made for the *agorai* (shopping centres) at Argos and Sikyon, however, seem from imitations on coins to have been good

old-fashioned heroic nudes and the one for Megara even depicted thunderbolt-hurling.

OVERVIEW

This then is Zeus when he is depicted on his own and when he is the exclusive focus of contemplation. The image projects his power: standing to wield the thunderbolt, or seated in majesty, this is the most powerful of all the gods. In an anthropomorphic religion he had been clearly envisaged as far back as Homer. This stabilises in the art, with its insistence on regular attributes – the lightning, the eagle. But since the statue of Pheidias gave new life to Homer's portrait, his iconography has changed for ever. Every later portrayal has Pheidias' Zeus in mind.

2

ZEUS'S RELATIONSHIPS WITH GODS AND MORTALS

ZEUS IN THE BRONZE AGE

Zeus is a special god. He may in fact be the only god to have survived from Indo-European times, when there must have been a polytheistic range of gods, a pantheon, just as there was in the Greece we know. In the 3,000 or so years in between, they had been modernised, replaced, updated. It is in the millennium before classical Greece, in the Late Bronze Age ('Mycenaean' Greece), that Zeus first comes into sight.

Amongst the earliest evidence is a tablet found at the Mycenaean palace at Pylos written in the 'Linear B' script perhaps around 1200 BC.[6] It seems to say something like this:

> <*something about*> the Diwion [Zeus-shrine] and bring gifts and lead the *porena* to Zeus 1 gold vessel, 1 man; to Hera 1 gold vessel, 1 woman; to Drimios [*we don't know who he is*] Son of Zeus 1 gold vessel, 1 <*man?*>

The *porena* must be gifts that walk – that's why they are *led*, not *brought*. They look like the man and woman – are they even human sacrifices?[7] The Diwion of Pylos (assuming it is the same one in each case) is a familiar part of this world, featuring on two other tablets, where Zeus receives gifts of around a litre of olive oil and possibly some clothing (Hiller 1978: 1004). We have no idea whether this is a palace shrine, some open-air place or something more ambitious (though that would be very unusual as far as we can tell from the archaeology).

There appears to be some sort of priest or attendant too at Pylos – the *Diwieus*. Already Hera appears in close association with Zeus, though there is also a goddess Diwia, who appears to have a priestess, the *Diwieia*.

Meanwhile at Knossos, a tablet (Knossos Fp1) tells us about an offering of oil to Zeus Diktaios ('of Mt Dikte'). His name must have been applied to a being already worshipped in a pre-existing shrine on Mt Dikte with the result that another variation entered the system of Greek religion. The sending of offerings 'to (Mt) Dikte' conjures up long processions of Greek-speaking peoples in the later second millennium BC. Grain and oil appear to be the usual gifts for Zeus, whether Diktaian or not. A month, *Diwios*, is named after him, which survives in the month *Dios* of later Macedonia, Aetolia and Thessaly; and this must mean that his festival, evidently the *Diwia*, took place at that time of the year.

So already we have many elements that will be familiar later: the god Zeus; an epithet associating him with a place, a mountain; a month, and therefore probably a festival; a precinct or special place, the Diwion; a priest; probably a consort (whether Hera or Diwia) and apparently a son, implying a mythology of a divine family. The son of Zeus has echoes in mainstream Greek tradition. The name of the god 'Dionysos' looks as though it must, one way or another, once have meant 'son of Zeus'.[8] And the 'Dios-kouroi' (Dioscuri) are certainly 'Zeus's sons': their place in an Indo-European god-system as twin horsemen is assured by their parallel in Sanskrit literature, the twin Aśvins – who are amongst the offspring of the primal god of begetting, *Prajāpati* (this is in the ancient epic, the *Mahābhārata* 1.30–2).[9]

FATHER, BROTHER, HUSBAND

The function that has above all preserved Zeus since Indo-European times is that of *father*, the function which is enshrined particularly in the 'vocative case', the form of the word used when addressing the god, as one must:

Zeu pater [Zeus father] . . .

Iliad 1.503 etc. – nine times in Homer's two epics

O father of ours, Kronides [son of Kronos], highest of rulers . . .

Athene speaking, *Iliad* 8.31

Zeus father, ruling from [Mt] Ida, most glorious, most great . . .

Iliad 3.276

Zeus father who is lord over men and immortals . . .

Odyssey 20.112.

These examples are from the epic but they run through Greek literature and life – as when we find written on a vase at the end of the 6th century BC, 'O Zeus father, may I become rich.'[10] This form of address also appears in Latin: when he does something or you address him he is *Iuppiter* (Jupiter, 'Jove-father'); but when he plays a less significant role in the sentence, he is merely *Iovem* (Jove). Jupiter rules over gods and men; we worship Jove.

If he is 'father', that is not just a pleasing aspect of family life and it does not make him into some creator god on the Judaeo-Christian model – that came later. He is father because he has unquestioned authority over the family of gods, and over a sort of extended household made up of both gods and men (Lloyd-Jones 1971: 33). It is in a way proof of this that he is in fact, as we will see below, father of some gods and father of some men, notably those at the beginnings of nations. But of course he is the brother, surprisingly the youngest, of Poseidon, Hades, Demeter and of his wife Hera.

If he is a head of household, that means he has a wife as well as children. At Dodona his wife must have been Dione, a name containing the root of his own name (*Di-*), a sort of 'Zeus-ona' and rather reminiscent of the Roman *Diana*. But, maybe because of the fusion of the religion and culture of the Zeus-worshippers as they arrived in Greece with those of the peoples who already lived there, the usual wife is Hera. One may wonder why he marries his sister. Brother–sister marriages happened amongst the pharaohs of Egypt. Did Late Bronze Age Greek royalty behave like this too? Or is the myth itself borrowed from somewhere like Egypt? Perhaps it is just that a marriage so early

in the genealogy of the gods tends to be incestuous, and Kerényi (1976: 112) is right: 'the theme serves to play a cosmogonic part as the procreative union of a "first couple"'.

The idea of a primal marriage is more than myth – it has an important role in cult. In Nauplion there was a spring, Kanathos:

> Here the people of Argos say that Hera, when she is washed yearly, becomes a virgin. This is from the Rite which they conduct for Hera and is one of the secrets.
> Pausanias 2.38.2f.

Thus the magic of cult brings us back to the starting point for a theogony, or for a marriage, and the marriage of Zeus and Hera is a way of restarting the clock. It is what we refer to as a *hieros gamos*, a 'sacred marriage' which can be ritually enacted.

There were many locations in Greece where this marriage of Zeus and Hera was supposed to have taken place.[11] A striking instance, where we know something of the festival surrounding it is in Boeotia. Here Plataea celebrated the Daidala in every sixth year and Boeotia as a whole celebrated the Great Daidala in every fifty-ninth year. Festivals which occur at such lengthy intervals, in both Greek and other Indo-European cultures, take on the character of festivals of renewal, where society makes a new start and in extreme cases the world may seem to begin again. In the case of the Daidala this sexual act and marriage takes place on Mt Kithairon, next to Plataea, on the border with Attica, and that is how Hera comes to be called Hera Gamelia ('of the rites of marriage') and Hera Teleia. The adjective *teleios* refers to the completion of the transition from betrothal to marriage and the completion of adulthood through marriage.[12] At the Daidala, however, Hera's favours have to be won. According to the 'aetiological' (explanatory) myth, Hera had fallen out with Zeus, and Zeus did not know what to do. A local hero now advised him: either Kithairon, who is the person that exists in myth to have Mt Kithairon named after him, the 'eponym' of Mt Kithairon, or Alalkomeneus, the eponym of Alalkomenai, further away in Boeotia, a wily first man. Following this advice, he dresses up a wooden statue, calls it Daidale (*daidala*, Pausanias says, is what they used to call *xoana* – wooden statues – in ancient times), and lets it be known that he is going to marry this Daidale. Hera then arrives in rage

and jealousy, but discovers the truth, thinks it a great joke, is reconciled with Zeus and herself goes through the marriage with him.[13] So there is a festival with a procession leading a wooden statue of Hera from the town of Plataea up Mt Kithairon, where the *hieros gamos* is to take place. And it is to achieve this that Zeus's marriage to Hera must constantly be undone – in order to be renewed.

Pausanias's Daidale story looks as though it owes a lot to Homer's picture of Zeus's stormy relationship with Hera. But it may be the other way round. Homer's picture is an odd one until we realise that it is this need in cult to prepare for a new marriage that drives the portrayal of the marriage as practically broken down. Homer preserves the cult dynamics quite faithfully: rage and jealousy in *Iliad* 1, wiped out for the time being by the *hieros gamos* on Mt Ida in Book 14. But the trickery in this case is of course Hera's, not Zeus's.

Real marriages in Athens often happened in the month of Gamelion (around February), the month of the Wedding Festival, the Gamelia. This involved prayers and offerings to Zeus Teleios and Hera Teleia whose *hieros gamos* was celebrated in the Theogamia on the 27th of the month and served to model and complete the marriage now to be enacted on earth.[14] A scatter of evidence suggests, as Kerényi observes, that mortal participants somehow sanctified their own marriages in this process and made them special, as sacred as that of the gods.

ZEUS BORN AND DYING

The birth of Zeus is not a moment of key significance as it is, say, for Jesus Christ. He is primarily there to rule and to order the world, not to have an exemplary biography. If we have stories of his birth that is because there has been a merger between the god Zeus and a divine child god, offspring of a 'Great Mother', who was there long before Zeus. However, the importance attributed to the divine child by local cults, and the pivotal role of the mountain in both cults, must have been such as to compel them to fasten their myth to Zeus.

So it is that Zeus is born in Arcadia to Rhea: in a rather tortured myth, she is at a cave at the peak of Mt Thaumasion ('wonderful') as she is *about* to give birth and at Mt Lykaion where she *does* give birth.[15]

That neatly mops up two cult sites with evidently inconsistent claims. But of course both are wrong, because the successful cult place in this competition was in Crete and he can then be proudly proclaimed Zeus *Kretagenes* ('Crete-born'). Thus in Hesiod she gets sent to Lyktos (Lyttos) in Crete with its cave, almost certainly the one above Psychro, where Zeus of Dikte may have been worshipped in early times. But this site died out around 500 BC and the most influential association was with Mt Dikte itself, not the modern Mt Dikte placed by modern mythmakers near the cave at Psychro, but the real one known to ancient geographers in the far east of the island in the territory of Praisos – which also included the shrine of Zeus Diktaios at the site known today as Palaikastro. Dikte sounds like *tiktei* ('gives birth to') and the myth tells that in a cave on Mt Dikte the infant Zeus's cries were drowned out by the noisy weapon-clanging dance of the Kouretes,[16] evidently reflecting in myth a ritual dance of warrior youth whose initiation practices were typically associated with caves. Thus a number of cult ingredients – song, dance, youths, mother goddess come together and come into focus as a colourful myth almost paradoxically recounting the infancy of the father of gods and men, the king of the immortals. The only problem is that the caves in the east of the island do not seem to have been cult places – that element has come from Mt Ida in the centre of the island, or indeed from Psychro.[17]

As stories from different sites amalgamate, a rich and inconsistent mythology is formed. Zeus was perhaps suckled by a goat, who acquired the name of 'Amaltheia', and Zenobius in the second century

Map 2 Crete: Zeus's myth and cult

AD said Zeus set her amongst the constellations. At Praisos they believed it was a sow that protected Zeus by grunting a lot and indeed they sacrificed to it. Another story tells of bees in a cave that no one may enter; once a year a brilliant light shines out from the cave as the 'blood of Zeus' from his birth boils over; here live 'holy bees, nurses of Zeus' on whose honey Zeus fed. The Holy Bees might just be a title of priestesses of some sort in a cult where Zeus is born anew every year. But the liveliest surviving evidence is an actual cult hymn found in the temple of Zeus Diktaios at Palaikastro. Colourfully christened the *Hymn of the Kouretes* by modern authors, it is in fact an energetic hymn summoning Zeus to give fertility and prosperity to the land and people. Its theology is quite quirky:

> Yo!
> Greatest Youth [*Kouros*], I say hail!,
> Son of Kronos, all-powerful joy,
> Come!
> Leading the *daimones* ['spirits', mini-gods]
> To Dikte annually make your way and
> rejoice in the song
> that we weave with the lyre
> and mix with flutes
> and standing we sing around your
> well-bounded altar
> Yo! [etc.]
>
> *Hymn of the Kouretes* 1–12

One may guess that this hymn to the 'Greatest Youth', with his troupe of demons, was in fact still performed in the third century AD, the date of this inscription, by youths in the territory of Praisos as an event in local folk culture.[18]

There was a parallel cult at the Cretan Mt Ida, a wooded mountain – which is what (*w*)*ida* means. It is confused with Dikte by Alexandrian authors who had never been there.[19] Apollonius of Rhodes talks of a '*Diktaios* grotto' (1.509, 1130) and an '*Idaios* cave' (3.134) as though they were the same thing, namely a 'Cretan cave' (2.1233). So mythology struggled and it was left to Diodorus (5.70) or his sources to tidy

this up: Zeus was *born* in the cave at Dikte *but brought up* in the cave on Ida (Nilsson 1967: i.320 n.3). Certainly the latter had an increasing influence and in Lyttos too Zeus could be referred to as *Widatas* ('of Ida').

Greek paganism was fairly open and tolerant. It had trouble, however, with the concept of gods dying, as gods are by definition immortal. This only happens in marginal and strange cases. Adonis, if a god, dies. In a story of Plutarch's (*Decline of Oracles* 419b–d), travellers in Egypt were told 'great Pan is dead'. Ares and Aphrodite are wounded by Diomedes in *Iliad* 5 in a supreme act of exaggeration by Homer, telling too how once Ares had nearly died (5.388). But it was another thing to have a tomb of Zeus, whose location, like the birthplace, varies between Dikte and Ida. That just shows Cretans were liars (Callimachus, *Hymn* 1.8). But it also shows very clearly how local cults introduce variant and inconsistent elements into the portrait of a Greek god; indeed the portrait of a Greek god is formed in the first place by the accretion over centuries of different characteristics and stories. If the god is born every year he will need to die too.

TITANOMACHY, TYPHON, GIGANTOMACHY

Zeus's control of the order of the universe is underlined by stories which involve establishing that order or defeating onslaughts on it. This sort of story is found first in our surviving literature, in Hesiod, who may be described as an 'orientalising' author, refreshing Greek mythology with quite a lot of Near-Eastern material – and this seems to be where these stories originated.

In the beginning were Heaven and Earth (Ouranos and Gaia). They beget the one-eyed Cyclopes and a series of persons known collectively as the Titans, including Kronos. Kronos castrates Ouranos and a new régime is born. Kronos then eats his children until a stone is substituted for Zeus (the stone was still on display at Delphi in the second century AD). Zeus recovered his brothers and sisters whom Kronos had swallowed and in a great battle – the Titanomachy – defeats the old régime. His crucial weapon in this battle, the thunderbolt, is made by the Cyclopes, which gives him the firepower for victory and an emblem

of that victory. This is described in Hesiod (*Theogony* 617–731) and had been described in the *Titanomachy* of Eumelos of Corinth, a lost poem of around 700 BC.

The battle with the Titans, as described by Hesiod, is passingly mighty: Zeus throws around plenty of lightning and thunder, the earth sizzles and the rivers and sea boil (*Theogony* 693–6). All that really matters is that the battle occurs and has an outcome, not the quality of the fighting and the plot over a rather standard ten years. The key part is played by his allies the Hundred-Handers (*Hekatoncheires*), Kottos, Briareos and Gyges. In Eumelos, it would seem, the sea monster Aegaeon-Briareos 'blazed fire from fifty upper bodies and clattered so many shields *against* the thunderbolts of Jove'.[20] This version is closer to the pattern of Near-Eastern myths like the myth from Ugarit (on the coast of what later became Syria), cited by West, in which Baal fights the seven-headed dragon Yammu (the sea).[21]

In any case, in the end most of the Titans are sent to Tartarus, apart from Hyperion the Sun, and others – mainly Titanesses including Leto, Themis and Mnemosyne. This must be the myth from which Homer gets Zeus's repeated threat to send other gods to Tartarus (Gantz 1993: 45). It is a supremely powerful and assertive thing to send someone to Tartarus and in time[22] there develops a word for it, *tartaroö*, or, more thoroughly, *katatartaroö* – '(utterly) to tartarise'.

Zeus's special enemy is Typh(a)on (Hesiod, *Theogony* 306), or Typhoeus (820–80 – the joints in Hesiod's text show rather badly). This monster shows up after the Titanomachy, embodying disorder and unintelligibility in his physique: 100 heads, which quite apart from other disagreeable aspects (snakiness), pour out a confusion of voices, between god-talk and bellowing bull (Hesiod, 831f.). Zeus needs all his strength to defeat him and finally to smite him down in some scorched place called Aidna. It was not long before this had transmuted to Mt Etna in Sicily, where the flames of Typhon appear awesomely through the volcano. The tale too was repatriated to the east in the Hellenistic Age, with its larger horizons. Now Typhon, who already in Pindar and Ps.-Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound* had come from Cilicia, moved a little further to become the dragon of the holy mountain, once Mt Hazzi of the Hittites, by then Mt Kasios in Syria (which rose above where Ugarit had been). In this version Zeus had

his sinews stolen by Typhon and, helpless, was finally rescued only by the intervention of Hermes and Goat-Pan (Aigipan), or in Nonnos' epic *Dionysiaka* (fifth century AD), Kadmos, founder of Thebes.

The Archaic Age, when this sort of poetry first flourished, was also the age of the hoplite – the heavily armed soldier who fought in formation with his fellows. As these men fought and died, sometimes the straps of their shields were decorated with metal bands of almost cartoon-strip scenes such as a hoplite might associate with. Found at Olympia where they were dedicated 2,500 years ago, several depict Zeus's battle with Typhon, the cosmic parallel for the hoplite's work (see fig. 5).

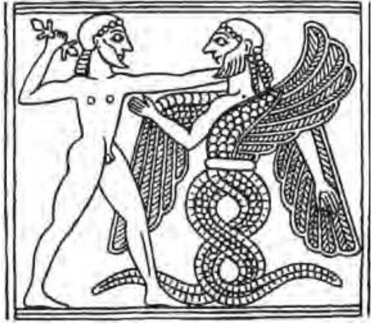


Figure 5 Zeus strikes Typhon, panels from shield-strap covers, sixth century BC (LIMC Typhon 17–18).

Titanomachies captured the imagination of Archaic Greece in poetry, but it was to *Gigantomachies* that sculpture tended to turn, battles against *Gigantes* (see fig. 6).

Gigantes are a race of beings, apparently men, not necessarily what we understand as 'giants', at least at first (rather like the mysterious *Nephilim* of *Genesis* 6.4, themselves translated as 'Gigantes' in the Greek Septuagint). No one really tells their story outright, though Herakles' role in it was known to the author of Ps-Hesiod *Catalogue of Women* (*fr.* 43a.65, sixth century BC). It is left for later authors[23] to piece together a story that the gods met the Gigantes in battle at Phlegra, a

place in Thrace, out in the northern barbarous regions beyond Greece, off the map. To defeat them, the gods needed the assistance of two demigods, Herakles and Dionysos – playing the role of the helpers in the Typhon myth.

Figure 6 Zeus in battle against the Gigantes, calyx crater c. 450BC (Antikenmuseum, Basel).

You often see the Gigantomachy in the sculptural decoration of Archaic temples: the statement of the authority of the gods, made by the temple itself, is reinforced by the myth told upon it. It was everywhere in the sixth and fifth centuries BC (all dates approximate): the temple of Artemis at Corfu (early sixth century BC), the Treasury of the Siphnians at Delphi (525 BC), the west front of the 'Alcmeonid' temple of Apollo at Delphi (500 BC), an anonymous treasury at Delphi (early fifth century BC), the Treasury of the Megarians at Olympia (510 BC), the east pediment of the Archaic temple of Athene on the Acropolis at Athens (520 BC), probably other sites at Athens in the late sixth, metopes from various temples at Selinous in Sicily (first half of the fifth century BC), the Olympieion at Agrigento in the second quarter of the fifth, a frieze at Sounion on the temple of Poseidon (450 BC), of course the wonderful metopes of the Parthenon, and finally the metopes of the Heraion at Argos (410 BC). Or not quite finally, because the frieze of the great altar of Zeus at Pergamon in the early second century BC, superbly recalling canonical Archaic and classical sculpture, displayed a Gigantomachy on a grand baroque scale.

These, then, are stories that serve to lead up to the reign of Zeus and to praise him for his power. They establish the awesome and indisputable character that requires us to recognise him as the most important of the gods. This is a special mythic language, borrowed from the Near East, where people were comfortable with concepts of powerful and awesome kingship. In this sublimated form, however, the Greeks found Hesiodic orientalism to their taste and it matched their expectations of superbeings. Gods, and to an extent heroes, could exhibit extremes that humans in a civilised Greek world might shun. That was because they were greater and it went to constitute their greatness. Violent and unassailable power underpinned a higher order, the justice of Zeus.

THE SEXUAL ACTIVITY OF ZEUS

> He was so addicted to sex that he lusted after all women and fulfilled his lust on all women.
>
> Clement of Alexandria, *Exhortation to the Greeks* 2 (27 P.)

> What is this Olympian palace to me? I will go to earth
> and leave behind my father's *aither* and living
> in our own Thrace I shall not see my mother grieving
> in anguish, nor Zeus the marriage-spoiler!
>
> Ares speaks in Nonnos, *Dionysiaka* 8.61–4

Zeus the adulterer

Zeus spends a lot of mythic time in adultery. You can think of this as a projection of male fantasies of what it would be like not to be constrained by society or morality. But there are other reasons that will become apparent when we sort these myths into categories. In so doing, I am aware that each myth has its interest and that we will have to skim very fast over them. We also need to bear in mind that Greeks told their myths in whatever way seemed useful for the purpose in hand. There was no Greek bible of myth, and details and precise names

do on occasion vary. Zeus may not be the only, or even the usual, father of the offspring I attribute to him below – it is simply that someone in antiquity said he was and they had a reason.

Generally when a god has sex, the reader should bear in mind the words Homer makes Poseidon speak to Tyro after the event:

> Rejoice, woman, in (this) love; as the year comes round
> you will bear splendid children, since not in vain are the beds
> of the immortals . . .
>
> *Odyssey* 11.248–50[24]

In most myths the point of intercourse with a god is the offspring that results. (In the case of Tyro it is Neleus, the ancestral king of Pylos, whose particular cult of Poseidon is memorably described at the beginning of *Odyssey* 3.) Conversely, if someone wishes proudly to claim that some hero or tribe is descended from Zeus, another adultery will usually be added to his list. This is how family trees ('genealogies') work. It is nevertheless remarkable how few children Zeus has by Hera and how insignificant they are. Perhaps rape and seduction account better for the distribution of offspring across Greece. If this is so, we reach the important conclusion that Zeus the rapist and adulterer is actually a product of the needs of what one might term 'international' poetry as it came together in the allegedly 'Dark Age' (say, 1200–776 BC). This was in fact a formative age, which had to combine different local traditions for the growing and dynamically self-aware market all over the Greek world. As worlds grow, they struggle to accommodate the new and to recover their unity through various cultural expressions, including religion and mythology. In the Dark Age Zeus's adultery reflects the changes of gear as the traditions of one Greek society combine with those of another. In the Hellenistic and Roman Ages the scope of the Greek world would suddenly expand again and Zeus would have to become Baal and Jupiter (pp. 107–9).

The lack of legitimate offspring casts particular light on the *hieros gamos* ('sacred marriage') of Zeus and Hera. Evidently it is the act of marriage that is foregrounded, not the procreation of children. Greek mythology as it is known to us did not generally set up a Divine Triad or Holy Family, though there were parts of the Greek world where *Zeus,*

Hera and Dionysos were worshipped together, for instance on Lesbos. This of course reflects the structure we saw in the Late Bronze Age with Drimios son of Zeus (p. 28ff). The Romans, under Etruscan influence, picked up this sort of patterning too and set up a great temple to *Jupiter, Juno and Minerva* (Zeus, Hera and Athene), the so-called Capitoline Triad, on the Capitoline Hill in Rome, dedicated in '509 BC'. And it would rise again in Greece when a new version of Egyptian religion was invented in the third century BC for the Mediterranean market, focusing on *Isis, Osiris and Horos/Harpokrates* (mother, father and son). Christianity too would eventually pay attention to this model.

Zeus begetter of gods

In the case of gods we need to know the parents of each in order to place them, to understand them, almost to register them. If it matters to us who our families are, it matters much more to a traditional society. 'Theogony' is the account of the 'births of gods', as in the *Theogony* of Hesiod (around 700 BC). It is therefore a particular form of genealogy. To generate gods, you need a really important god as a father, and preferably divine mothers if a satisfactorily qualified god is to be the result; just as a citizen father and a citizen mother are required to make a citizen Athenian child.

Zeus begets Apollo and Artemis, Aphrodite, Ares, Athene, Dionysos, Hermes. In fact he begets all the Olympian gods[25] that are not his brothers and sisters – they are the children of Kronos (Hestia, Demeter, Hera, Hades, Poseidon). Genealogy makes the Olympian gods into a tightly knit system, a close group, a team: they are depicted as a specially close family. These gods as a matter of historical fact all had their separate origins, mostly lost to us, but visible in their differing traditional mothers. Zeus's official mythological wife, Hera, is usually the mother only of Ares in this group – and otherwise only of the minor goddesses Hebe ('youth/peak of condition' – she becomes Herakles' wife on Olympus) and Eileithyia (an ancient birth goddess). Dione, Zeus's consort from Dodona, is used as the mother of Aphrodite. Sometimes too she is the mother of Dionysos, though usually it is a

mythological mortal, Semele. A mysterious Maia, a daughter of Atlas, is Hermes' mother, and Leto is the mother of Apollo and Artemis. The story of Athene, from Hesiod onwards, is that Zeus produced her on his own, out of his own head, because he had swallowed *Metis*, ('Intelligence', a personification more than a goddess).[26] This gives rise to some fine depictions on vases showing Hephaistos splitting his head open with an axe.

The *Theogony* of Hesiod is an unusually original and inventive poem, both in its original parts and in the parts that someone added as the poem circulated (line numbers over 900). Hephaistos may seem to be a son of Zeus and Hera in Homer's *Iliad*, but late in the *Theogony* (927) he is begotten by Hera without male assistance, presumably to account for his lameness. Aphrodite is Zeus's daughter in the *Iliad* (5.370 and 428), but Hesiod wants her born from the froth of Ouranos' genitals as they floated, severed, on the sea (*aphros* = 'froth', *Theogony* 191) and that is the version we all remember, with thanks to Botticelli.[27] Hesiod's Horai too are remodelled. In Athenian cult the Horai (Seasons) were Thallo and Karpo ('Vigorous-growth' and 'Fruitful'), but in *Theogony* 901–3, they press home a less seasonal message: these children of Zeus and *Themis* ('that which is religiously lawful') are Eunomia, Dike and Eirene – 'Law-and-order', 'Justice' and 'Peace' (West 1966: 406f.). This shows the danger of taking a text, particularly an influential one, as simply relaying 'Greek mythology' to us or just reading flat statements out of a handbook of mythology. Each text has its own agenda. It says something too that the Moirai (Fates) are the children of Zeus and Themis at *Theogony* 904: at 217, by the real Hesiod, they had been gloomy children of Night, like the baneful Keres ('Dooms'). Other Hesiodic abstract children of Zeus include the Charites ('Graces') and the Muses, daughters of Memory (*Mnemosyne*).

This approach leads to mystic writers, 'Orphics', who in the sixth and fifth centuries BC made Ananke (Necessity) the mother of Adrasteia (Inescapability), Rhea the mother of awesome Persephone, Queen of the Underworld, and Persephone herself mother of the dying god Dionysos Zagreus. The exotic mythologising of the Orphics formed a counterweight to the development of what we call philosophy, which rested on extending mythmaking to generate the same impressive

weight of worldview. It will not surprise us that Zeus coupled with Rhea in snake-form.

In the mainstream not Rhea but Demeter bears Persephone to Zeus and she also bears Nemesis. Persephone is married to her uncle, Hades, a familiar pattern of marriage for instance in classical Athens.[28] Nemesis seems like an abstraction ('righteous anger', cf. below), but she also had long-standing cult as a real divinity at Rhamnous in Attica. It is right therefore for her to have an important mother.

Zeus also begets gloomier figures. Amazingly, he is the father of Tantalos and Tityos, two of the sinners who were powerful enough to offend the gods and be punished in Hades forever. He is also father to Hekate, a rather shadowy goddess who does not belong to the canonical set of 12 Olympians and is often just treated as a form of Artemis. However, she had a real enough cult in the right places for the famous proto-historian Hecataeus of Miletus to be named after her and for Hesiod to be interested in her. This outsider, sometimes identified with Artemis, appropriately becomes the goddess of crossroads (a place of danger), the dead as they haunt this world, and witches. Lesser gods too may, to our surprise, have mattered enough to be born of Zeus: the rustic Pan or Goat-Pan (Aigipan), and the Dactyls ('Finger' gods) of Mt Ida in Crete or Phrygia, dwarfs numbering five or ten like fingers, who invented iron-working.

The Dioskouroi are, as we have seen, 'sons of Zeus'. He begets them by Leda and they have particular cult in Sparta, where to say *tō siō*, 'the (pair of) gods', is to name them. They are embedded in the pre-Dorian mythology as sons of the Spartan ruler Tyndareus. Here, however, Zeus, disguised as a swan, has sex with a married woman, Leda, and we can see that her marriage is not incidental but itself has a purpose. Mortal marriage is no obstacle to divine parentage, something which must take its origin ultimately from the pretensions of real royal genealogies – just as the Egyptian tradition led to the story that Zeus Ammon was the real father of Alexander the Great, rather than merely his father Philip. Boeotia too had its own version of the Dioskouroi, the twins Amphion and Zethus. It is therefore no coincidence that Zeus is their father too. It must also be said that once gods become plural they do tend to get confused with other plural sets. The Dioskouroi are found in cult as the 'Lords (*Anaktes* or *Anakes*) Dioskouroi', or just as

'Lords', and become interlaced with the Kabeiroi (or their alias, *The Great Gods*), the Kouretes (who danced in armour round the baby Zeus), and the Korybantes (also begotten by Zeus). Dioskouroi, Kouretes, Korybantes – all *youth* (*kouros/koros*) gods, projections of youths as a class in society, trainee warriors. This is worth thinking about when looking at Zeus and the phatries at Athens (p. 66).

Their sister Helen has a special position in Greek myth: 'though a huge number of demigods was begotten by Zeus', she is the only mortal *daughter* of Zeus (Isocrates, *Helen* 16). Her sister Clytaemestra was after all merely the daughter of the mortal Tyndareus, but Helen is the daughter of Zeus himself.[29] Helen is believed by some originally to have been a goddess, perhaps a tree goddess, Helen Dendritis ('of the tree') in Sparta. But if we turn aside from cult, she seems to have a long history: her functional counterpart in Sanskrit and other mythologies is a daughter of the Sun, existing to be captured and then to be recovered by her brothers, the twin youth gods.

Birth from Zeus is doubly important for inscribing foreign gods, such as Britomartis (an Artemis on Crete) or Velchanos (an old Cretan god sometimes alternatively made into Zeus Velchanos), into Greek mythology and culture. They gain a sort of cultural citizenship through genealogical adoption. Another son is Belus, obviously Baal, the 'Lord' god of the Phoenicians and Syrians. He becomes a son of Libya, presumably because of Carthage, a Phoenician colony. And if Zeus begets a Herakles by Asteria, he is really incorporating the birth of the Phoenician Herakles, Melqart, by the Phoenician goddess Astarte.

Zeus begetter of mortals

Turning now to mortals, many of Zeus's children exist for 'aetiological' reasons, to *explain the origins* of geography and nations. This usually works by creating eponyms, persons that exist in order that people and places may be *named after* them. These names may be obscure to us, but they mattered crucially for those who lived in these landscapes. I hope you will find map 1 on p. xxvi useful.

In northern Greece, his offspring included Thebe and Lokros, accounting for Thebes (Boeotia), and the Locrians (Locris). Thessaly

was possibly the most important centre for Zeus-worship (that is why Olympus is on its borders) and specially exploited ancestry from Zeus: delightfully, his son Meliteus ('Honeyman'), was fed on honey by the bees, before founding Melite (Phthiotis). The Haemones (Pelasgiotis), the Magnesians and the Myrmidons (the tribe of the *Iliad*'s Patroclus) traced their ancestry back to sons of Zeus – Haemon, Magnes and Myrmidon. Their neighbours the Macedonians did the same with Macedon. In the northwest, his oracular site at Dodona (Epirus) goes back to his son Dodonaios, and the tribe that gave the Romans and us the name 'Greeks' goes back to his son Graikos. Down in *central Greece* we find a Megaros (who alone survives the Flood, in order to found Megara), and in the *Peloponnese* the ancestors of major tribes – Achaeus (Achaeans), Lakon (Laconians) and Arkas (Arcadians), and some cities and hamlets – Lakedaimon (Sparta, Laconia), Argos and a minor Olenos. The same language is used in Greek-settled Sicily to create Akragas (Agrigento) and to interpret the Palisci, who are Zeus's children by (Mt) Etna. Wherever Greeks went they used this language, accounting for Cretans, Thracians, Bithynians, Carians, Lydians and Dardanians – a tribe in the Balkans identified by epic tradition with the Trojans. But when we are talking about this sub-variety of Trojans, their leader is Aeneas, the son not of Zeus but of a mighty goddess of Asia Minor, brought into the Greek fold by being named as Aphrodite.

Even where the hero is not an eponym, he may nevertheless be a founding father or one who is a key figure in the mythic and cultural history of a place or region. Then too Zeus may be his father. So we can see from the *Iliad* that Sarpedon, the leader of the Lycians, matters dearly to Zeus. And Perseus too, son of Danae, may once have been a key figure in the mythology of Mycenae.

The colour of myth: golden rain and other stories

However, myths have a life of their own and in some cases the genealogical purposes cease to predominate and may even recede altogether. This is what leads to vibrant myths, important for literature, art and music from classical times to the present day, as we shall also see in the second part of this book.

Zeus gave up his affair with the sea nymph Thetis because the son was destined to be more powerful than the father. Thus Thetis married Peleus, and Achilles, the greatest of the Homeric heroes, was born. What is left behind is the soft spot that Zeus has for this daughter of Nereus, colouring her appeal in *Iliad* 1. In the fifth century BC that literary interest takes off, in Pindar and Aeschylus. In art Thetis offers less interesting opportunities, however, than the theme of his abduction of Europa from Sidon (Phoenicia). There, Zeus is transformed into a bull riding the waves with Europa on his back. This is a favourite scene from as early as 560 BC (LIMC Europe 22) up to the wall-paintings of Pompeii. It must have figured, too, in early poems such as the *Europeia* of Eumelos. This is a momentous myth because Europa's brother Kadmos must search for her and in the process transform his nationality from Phoenician to Greek (Euripides, *fr.* 819 Kannicht[2]) – in order to found Thebes. This myth therefore negotiates the boundaries between Europe (to which she gives her name) and Asia, between Greek identity and the identity of the Phoenicians, to whose mercantile supremacy the Greeks succeeded, travelling the seas for trade and discovery.

Io was a virgin priestess of Hera at her shrine near Argos until Zeus loved her. Then, whether through the wrath of the goddess or thanks to a failed attempt at concealment by Zeus, she is turned into a cow. Like many of Zeus's romantic themes this has no place in monumental or dedicatory sculptures; rather it takes off in fifth-century red-figure vases, just as tragedy is beginning and fuelling the already buoyant market for myth on pots. Zeus enthroned reaches out to poor Io, transformed into a cow, in a *kalpis* of around 470 (LIMC Io 11). On a *pelike* of around 440 it looks as though Zeus has met Io (horns and cow-ears mark her out) at a party (LIMC Io 62)! Around 330 BC there was a painting by Nicias – lost, like all the famous Greek paintings – where the effects of Zeus's actions were depicted but not Zeus himself. Nicias' painting then led to the frescoes of her at Pompeii, which we do have. A parallel case is Kallisto ('Prettiest'), a nymph in the company of Artemis until Zeus makes love to her. Unable to hide her pregnancy from the wrathful goddess, she is turned into a bear, shot and transformed into the Great Bear constellation in the sky – though not without somehow first giving birth to Arcas, the first Arcadian. Zeus is

rare too in depictions of Kallisto, though there is a late third-century AD silver ladle that depicts him seducing Kallisto whilst disguised as Artemis (LIMC Kallisto 4).

Figure 7 Danae receives the golden rain, red-figure krater c. 490/80 BC (Hermitage, St Petersburg).

Akrisios had an oracle that his daughter Danae's son (Perseus) would kill him, another of these myths that portray anxieties about roles within the family. In this fantasy, Akrisios locks Danae in a bronze tower, but there is no escaping Zeus, who descends in the form of fertilising golden rain. Danae does appear in art after 500 BC, with the beautiful hair that attracted Zeus, sometimes neatly tied up in a *kekryphalos* (net headdress), and her robe outstretched to welcome the golden rain.[30] Some fourth-century BC funerary *lekythoi* (oil-jugs) even suggest she symbolises the contact that the dead make with the

divine at death. But it is the fantasy of the *golden rain* that continually attracts artists, from Roman wall-paintings and mosaics through to modern European painting.

These are well-loved stories, full of colour and action. Many of them are told with lightness of touch and superb wit by Ovid in the *Metamorphoses* (complete by AD 8), a repertoire of myth from the creation to the present day told in 15 books in a relentless sweep with huge energy and in beautiful Latin. In Book 1 we meet Io, Book 2 Callisto and Europa, Book 3 Semele and Danae. Or we can enjoy Jupiter's (Zeus's) tours of inspection when he visits the world in disguise in the Lycaon story (Book 1) and the story of Philemon and Baucis (Book 8) and restores justice: Lycaon serves him child casserole and is punished by transformation into a wolf; Baucis and Philemon offer simple hospitality and earn the gift of dying at the very same moment as each other.

Underneath the colourful stories, there are some more serious messages. Zeus patrolling the world is an implementation of his function as controller of the world order and distributor of a sort of justice, of which we will see more below. The transformations and disguises doubtless each have their own origins, but they have in common that Zeus is an unseen force of incalculable power. Only Semele seeks to see that power as it really is and her mortal frame cannot withstand the thunderbolt that *is* Zeus. We for our part need to be careful to recognise when that power is at work, in whatever form.

In several cases we see myth homing in on a moment fraught with danger for the virgin. She meets Zeus, the embodiment of the dangerous and powerful male, perhaps the husband depicted as alien and illegitimate. Her beauty exposes her to him and the result is suffering and transformation. The stories focus on these vivid expressions of the end of maidenhood. We do not find stories of incorporation back into the community as a mother with all the authority of womanhood and as part of a female citizen order which meets to celebrate great rituals such as the Thesmophoria. Anxiety makes memorable myth.

Zeus's most famous, and last (Diodoros 4.14.4), son was Herakles. In his case Zeus literally replaces the mortal father and visits Alkmene, disguised as her husband Amphitryon whilst he is away at war. Comic potential was found in this myth, even as early as Aristophanes' *Birds*

in which the birds threaten to cut off the gods' airspace so that, when they have erections, they will be unable to visit the likes of Alkmene, Alope or Semele (554–9; Alope was a conquest of Poseidon, the other two of Zeus). But we know the story best from the excellent Roman comedy of Plautus, the *Amphitruo*, based on a lost Greek play, deriving ultimately from the so-called 'Middle Comedy' (fourth century BC) when mythological burlesque took off. A farcical rendition of this theme is depicted on a south Italian vase of the late fourth century BC (LIMC Alkmene 2) showing Zeus and Hermes padded up grotesquely as 'gibbering' characters (*phlyakes*), carrying a ladder to climb up to Alkmene in the window! A different part of Alkmene's story must, very unusually, be reconstructed from other depictions on south Italian vases (LIMC 3–7). It seems that they are reproducing some tragedy, quite probably Euripides' *Alkmene*. Now Amphitryon is angry at the unfaithfulness of Alkmene, she flees to an altar, he builds a pyre around it and in the nick of time Zeus causes clouds to quench the fire. It looks as though a rule is upheld: tragic Zeus does not appear on stage; but a comic Zeus can.

Leaving this excitement behind, Herakles represents in myth an extreme of aspiration and Freudian denial of the father. He is a hero, not really the son of his mortal father. He seeks through his prodigious labours to transcend the human condition represented by that father altogether. Successfully, because he is the only hero to be stripped of his mortality – in agonising flames of a funeral pyre on the peak of Mt Oeta. This hero becomes a god like his real father, Zeus.

Zeus and Ganymede

> 'Loving boys is something enjoyable since once Ganymede too was loved by the Son of Kronos, king of the immortals.'
>
> Theognis 1345f.

No story of Zeus's seductions would be complete without Ganymede, the son of the Trojan king Tros (or alternatively Laomedon) and the most beautiful boy on earth.[31] Zeus abducts him and compensates his father with a gift of splendid immortal horses. The role of Ganymede

is then to be the server of wine for Zeus. This story in fact reflects ancient initiation customs known from an instance in Crete.[32] There a person of high status ritually abducts the prime boy of the adolescent age group (the *kleinos*, 'famous') and gives expensive presents. Among the required presents given to the boy is a drinking-cup. It is hard to catch the tone of this ritual: the boy is actually undergoing a sort of apprenticeship rather like our picture of a squire to a knight. Cup-bearing looks like part of the picture. So does sex. The Cretan *kleinos* had to say whether the sex had been acceptable (as opposed to violent) and inscriptions found on Thera certifying such acts seem to belong in the same ritual context.

These customs are only known in any detail from one account of 'a unique custom' in Crete. So, the ritual basis for the myth had more or less died out. But the myth, as myths do, had taken on a life of its own and provided a model in heaven for a form of homosexual relationship with an adolescent. This sort of relationship was in itself acceptable within certain parameters in classical Athens: here, the associated gift-giving was also ritualised, and the Athenian politician Alcibiades in his youth was not so unlike the Cretan *kleinos*. Thus what the myth says about Zeus is not meant to be something disgraceful and perverted – though it certainly becomes so for readers not sharing that culture, like the Christian Clement of Alexandria writing around AD 200:

> Your gods didn't even keep off boys! – one of them [Herakles] loving Hylas . . . another loving Ganymede. Let your women fall down before these gods! Let them pray that their husbands should be like this, so well-behaved that they may become like the gods by doing what they do! Let your boys get used to worshipping them so that when they become men they may have the gods by them as a clear example of perversion.
>
> Clement of Alexandria, *Exhortation to the Greeks* 2 (28 P.)

In art, however, this myth of abduction becomes a celebration of beauty admired even by the gods. At first, around 560, Ganymede is simply a member of the Olympian court (LIMC Ganymedes 57). Then on Athenian fifth-century vases (fig. 8) he becomes a standard Athenian boyfriend, courted and half-reluctant. Some time in the

Figure 8 Zeus woos Ganymede, red-figure cup by the Penthesilea Painter, c. 460/50 BC (Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Ferrara). Lightning bolt and sceptre tumble as Zeus adopts fifth century Athenian ways; the boy holds a cockerel, the usual present from a lover.

fourth century Zeus's eagle appears as the vehicle of abduction (Gantz 1993: 560). We first hear of it in a statue of Leochares and it may well be that it was from art, with its sense of the attributes of Zeus, that this particular motif originated rather than from poetry. One doubt remains, however, as Gantz observes: if you see the eagle abducting Ganymede, is it Zeus's bird or is it Zeus himself in the form of an eagle? By Roman times Ganymede wears a Phrygian cap to mark him as an easterner, like Attis or Mithras, and is often accompanied by the eagle rather than riding on it (see fig. 9). In a religious context, the myth of abduction can model the successful escape of the soul to the divine at death and it is for this reason that it appears on the stucco ceiling of the great underground basilica at the Porta Maggiore in Rome, which has been thought to be a Pythagorean place of worship. It is also why

Figure 9 Ganymede and the eagle, Roman sarcophagus, second century AD (LIMC Ganymede 109). Ganymede with Phrygian cap and the eagle that grants immortality to the sleeping dead – part of the décor of death.

it is appropriate for funerary monuments, in particular sarcophagi such as the one depicted here in fig. 9.

OVERVIEW

The mythology of Zeus, from all over the Greek world, is one dominated by his sexual adventures. We have seen how these can be understood in different ways. On one level, the mythology reflects some of the psychology of Greek males in their male-dominated

societies. On another level, they display his enormous and irresistible power to command the service of beauty wherever it is found. But most important, they cause him to be the foundation of the society of gods and the society of men, because when you for instance trace a Greek people back to its origin, the answer is so often Zeus. He has been Zeus father since Indo-European times.

The god that is worshipped with such magnificence is the same god that is found, often in disguise, in acts which no society would sanction. This tension, which has arisen from the mythological need to explain the foundations of our societies, can be played in many ways: as something mysterious and unfair about the rule of the gods, as for instance in tragedy, or as something jarringly comic, bringing the gods literally down to earth. Of this Ovid is the master in his *Metamorphoses* and this is the tradition which we will see energise Western European art.

The way he was depicted in art became defined in the Archaic Age. This was a time of frequent wars and battles and one very open to the establishment of a régime through military action. This was the time when titanomachies and gigantomachies caught the imagination, and sculpture advertised to the age of the hoplite the ways in which Zeus's reign had been secured.

So the diverse mythology of Zeus has its origins in his authority and in social organisations. But once established, the better-known myths have a colour of their own and present a wonderful range of opportunities to the creative artist.

3

ZEUS FROM WEATHER TO FATE

WEATHER, LIGHTNING

It is easy when thinking about loftier roles of Zeus to forget a central role in cult: in both literature and life he is the sky and weather god. The sky especially is his realm. According to Poseidon in *Iliad* 15. 187–93, a lottery shared out the universe between three sons of Kronos: Poseidon got the sea, Hades the 'misty darkness' where he rules over the dead, and Zeus 'the broad sky in the ether and clouds' (192) – leaving the earth and Olympus as common ground.

Zeus can be held to be responsible in an astonishingly direct way for weather phenomena. Somehow Macrobius (*Saturnalia* 1.15.14, *c.* AD 440) had come across the titbit of information that Cretans called day 'Zeus'. That was rather odd, but it was commonplace to view Zeus as raining:

> Zeus rains and from heaven there is a great
> storm and the streams are stiff with water.
>
> Alcaeus, *fr*. 338.1–2 Lobel-Page

Zeus does not send rain, he actually rains.[33] So, in Aristophanes' comedy, *Clouds*, the simpleton Strepsiades is confronted by a wonderfully overdrawn sophistic Socrates and cannot understand how Socrates can claim that Zeus does not exist:

> Soc.: What Zeus? Don't talk nonsense at me. There is no Zeus.

> STREPS.: What do you mean? *Who rains then?* That's what you can tell me for starters.
>
> Aristophanes, *Clouds* 367f.

It is also traditional that he 'lightens', i.e. himself does lightning as we see in Homer:

> As when the husband of Hera with her lovely hair *lightens*
> making a large and awesome rainstorm or hail
> or blizzard when snow sprinkles the ploughland . . .
>
> Homer, *Iliad* 10.5–7

The rainstorm and snowstorm are particular to him: they are Zeus's rainstorm (*Iliad* 5.91) or Zeus's snow flurries (19.357). And the clouds are Zeus's and the rays of sunlight are Zeus's.[34] I think we should hear in this the expression of piety in a traditional society, a sort of religious humility faced with the weather. More generally, Homer's Zeus brings clouds together (he is *nephelegereta* – 'cloud gatherer') and specialises in black clouds (he is *kelainephes* – 'black-clouded'). Together with lightning we now have the ingredients for all sorts of storms, particularly those that spring up out of a clear sky or cluster around a mountain as rainclouds do, demonstrating beyond doubt that there is a great god at work:[35]

> As when from the high peak of a great mountain
> lightning-gatherer Zeus stirs a dense cloud
> and all the peaks and jutting crags shine out
> and the glens, and the awesome *aither* is torn apart from heaven down . . .
>
> *Iliad* 16.297–300

The poet is a little overexcited here – it is clouds that are gathered, not lightning, and I'm not too sure about how you rend the ether in quite this way – but the effect is wonderful and we sense the majestic power of Zeus. These ways of attributing weather to Zeus are not just poetic, but also part of ordinary speech, even if sometimes a more cautious 'the god' is substituted for Zeus in these expressions, a vaguer method of speaking that survived even the conversion to Christianity. An inscription describes rainwater as 'water from Zeus'. What was odd

was to go a step further, as some Orphics did, and say a shower was the *tears of Zeus*.[36]

In Homer no fewer than 26 epithets link Zeus with thunder and lightning. Most often he is *erigdoupos*, a resounding word meaning something like 'very thundering' (*Iliad* seven times, *Odyssey* three), and *terpikeraunos*, 'rejoicing in lightning' (*Iliad* eight times, *Odyssey* seven). *Terpikeraunos* may even contain within it a long-lost Indo-European word for a god of lightning and of the oak tree that lightning so easily explodes, known for instance to Lithuanians as Perkunas. There is no such thing as a thunderbolt, because lightning is not an object that is thrown, and we cannot literally be thunderstruck or struck by lightning, as if by an object. But for the Greeks thunderbolts were real and Zeus had his manufactured by the Cyclopes on their anvils under Mt Etna in Sicily:

> Trusting in these [thunder and lightning bolts] he is lord over mortals and immortals.
>
> Hesiod, *Theogony* 506, cf. 854

This is the missile Zeus uses to sink Odysseus' ship (*Odyssey* 12.416), and, as we have seen, it is his hallmark. So, from praying for rain we reach a mythology of him fighting giants in cosmic battles for control of the universe.

The electricity of the sky is awesome and invites cult. Places where lightning struck were very special and practically showed the god descending. In Arcadia we find fifth-century BC inscriptions dedicating a spot to Zeus *Keraunos*, 'Zeus lightning' or Zeus *Storpaos*, 'Zeus of lightning' (*IG* V 2.288, 64). Elsewhere you might find Zeus *Astrapaios*, or *Keraunios* ('of lightning', both), or *Keraunobolos* ('lightning thrower'), or *Kataibates*, 'descending', or, at Gytheion (Laconia) *Kappotas*, 'falling'. At Gytheion a stone was on display in the second century AD, which in our modern mythology we call a meteor.

Though his storms are conspicuous, we should not overlook his serenity. He lives in the *aither* (Latin *aether* or *ether*), the brilliant upper atmosphere, fiery and shining, up above the clouds (see below). Repeatedly, he is *aitheri naion*, 'dwelling in the ether'.[37] And if he is responsible for downpours, he is also responsible for the droughts that

occur for lack of them – ‘of rains and of droughts Zeus is the steward’ (Isocrates, *Busiris* 13).

THE MOUNTAIN

Nearest to the sky, rising mightily from the horizontal earth are mountains. And a Greek of the late second century AD might believe (rather like the Victorians)[38] that

> the first men dedicated mountain peaks to Zeus as his statues, Olympus and Ida and any other mountain that is close to the sky.
>
> Maximus of Tyre, *Oration* 8.1

There are many Mt Olympuses in the Greek world, including Asia Minor (modern Turkey), whether because Olympus was just a pre-Greek word for ‘mountain’ or because, as I think, migrating Greeks considered it important to have an Olympus where they lived (this is far from the only Thessalian place name to pop up elsewhere). The most important Mt Olympus, and an impressive one whose highest peak reaches 2918 m, is situated on the borders of Thessaly and Macedonia as you enter the main part of Greece.

The idea developed that there were two levels of air: the lower air (*aer*) and the upper fiery air (*aither*, as we have just seen). It seemed to Cook that a mountain such as Olympus, visibly rising above the

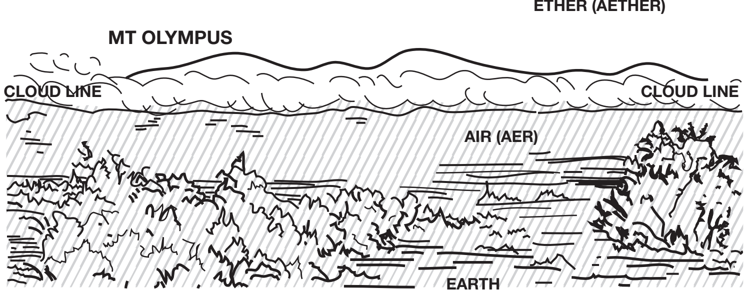


Figure 10 Ether, Air and Olympus (after Cook 1914: i.100f. and pl. ix).

rainclouds, must have been seen as reaching the very ether where the gods lived. It is a tempting thought. Certainly, ancient writers commented on how the ashes from sacrifice at extreme height on the peak of Mt Olympus were undisturbed by rain or wind, and letters which it was the custom to write in the ashes remained till the next occasion.[39] They surely had in mind the magical lines of Homer:

> . . . Olympus, where they say the secure seat of the gods for ever
> abides; it is neither shaken by wind nor ever soaked
> by rain nor does snow come there, but it is utterly clear weather,[40]
> cloudless, and a bright radiance is cast over it
> and on it the blessed gods rejoice for all time.
>
> Homer, *Odyssey* 6.42–7

Scholars used to be inclined to locate the cult of Zeus on the mountain on the northernmost peak. In more modern times there has been a simple stone shrine there of his replacement (see p.119), St Elias, to which processions wended their way. But in fact the substantial remains of cult – ashes (could the excavators still make out the letters?), inscriptions to 'Zeus Olympios', pots, pedestals, fourth-century BC coins – were found in 1961 further south on the peak of St Antonios (2817 m) during the building of an observatory.[41] In any event, we should not be looking for anything too grand, because much of the cult activity took place at the city named after Zeus, Dion (the later form of the Mycenaean *Diwion*), which stood at the foot of the mountain on the northern side. Dion, the major Macedonian festival centre, has been being excavated for some years but it was only in 2003 that Professor Pantermalis and his team discovered the sanctuary of Zeus itself. Astonishingly, the cult statue, of Zeus Hypsistos ('Highest'), was still in place (fig. 11).[42] Its head may be missing but it is recognisably of the Pheidian type, as you can see by comparing it with figs 4 and 12. That left arm is reaching for its sceptre!

'Olympus' is central to the identity of Zeus, and this may well derive ultimately from the strong commitment to worship of Zeus in Thessaly and Macedonia. This may explain the naming of other mountains in the Greek world as Olympus too, as well as underlie the description of the gods as 'Olympian' (or 'having Olympian homes') in Homer and

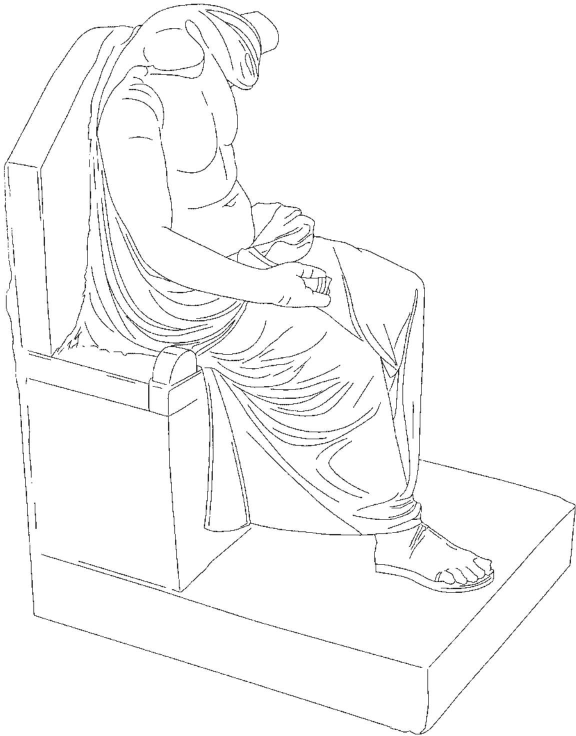


Figure 11 Artist's impression of the Zeus enthroned from Dion.

the poets and the frequent worship of Zeus Olympios elsewhere, for instance at Olympia.

Mountains were the focus of Zeus cult elsewhere too. This explains for instance a Zeus Aenesios of Mt Ainos on Kephallenia, the Zeuses who we see dominating mountains at the heart of states (pp.68–71), and a number of Zeuses, particularly in Boeotia, who are called *Keraios*, *Karaios*, *Karios*. This has led to an ancient Greek mythology of Karians (a nation of Asia Minor) living in Boeotia, but the explanation looks simpler – this is a god of the *kara* ('head'), i.e. the mountain peak, who in other states might be called *akraios*. Athens had a particular love of

mountain sanctuaries, as Pausanias notes (1.32.2), though offerings are fewer and farther between after 300 BC: On Mt Hymettos there was a Zeus Hymettios, on Mt Parnes a Zeus in bronze, on the 'not very big mountain' Anchesimos there was a Zeus too. Elsewhere there were altars of Zeus Ombrios, 'of rain showers', and Zeus Semaleos, 'who gives signs' – evidently weather signs, perhaps cloud formations or, more immediately, lightning and thunder (Parker 1996: 30–32).

These shrines are not centres of habitation and we must therefore envisage processions of people and sacrificial animals to them. So in the case of Mt Olympus, it may well be that the procession would start at Dion. In another case, on Cos, there is an association of those who make a monthly, voluntary journey together to Zeus Hyetios ('of rain').[43] One might also envisage special journeys in time of need, as happened at Mt Lykaion (Arcadia):

> If a drought lasts for a long time and by now their seed in the grounds and their trees are drying up, in such circumstances the priest of Zeus Lykaios prays at the water [of Hagno, a spring on the mountain] and makes all the sacrifices that custom requires; he then lowers an oak branch to the surface – not deep into the spring – and as the water is stirred water vapour rises from it, like mist, and after a short while the vapour becomes cloud and draws other clouds to it until it makes rain fall on the land of the Arcadians.
>
> Pausanias 8.38.4

At the top of the mountain there would have been an altar and ashes from previous sacrifices, maybe a statue or two and perhaps offerings of coins and other objects. At Megara the rock was carved to provide a giant throne from which the god might be envisaged as viewing the human world below; this throne gave rise to the story of Xerxes watching the battle of Salamis from a mountain top between Megarid and Attica, but it faces the wrong way for that (Cook 1914: i.145). Occasionally, and strikingly, a temple might grace the mountain top if for instance its centrality eventually justified the expenditure of funds – much as the Parthenon of Athene caught the eye on the Athenian acropolis (156 m). A temple of Zeus Polieus was built by the brutal tyrant Phalaris on the loftier acropolis of Akragas (Agrigento in Sicily; 350 m), and another of Zeus Larisaios on the Larisa (the acropolis,

289 m) was built at Argos. Above Glisas in Boeotia, on Mt Hypatos ('Highest', 730 m) rose the temple of Zeus Hypatos (Pausanias 9.19.3). And on Rhodes there was a temple of Zeus Atabyrios on Mt Atabyrion (1215 m – there was another temple of Zeus on the Rhodian acropolis or, rather, plateau). These are not the only examples but they are probably the major ones.

CONTROL OF TIME AND EVENTS

Zeus controls the weather on a given day. Particular changes in the weather, especially lightning, may have significance and be called a 'sign from Zeus', *diosemia* – as we see when 'thrice from the Ida mountains Zeus thundered, giving a sign to the Trojans' (*Iliad* 8.170f.). But he also steers the sequence of days and what happens to anyone on any particular day. So Hesiod in his *Works and Days* talks of Zeus completing the 60 days after the winter solstice (565), and Eumaeus the (obviously pious) swineherd can speak of 'all the days and nights that are from Zeus' (*Odyssey* 14.93). And the days of the months have a particular significance in the final section of Hesiod's *Works and Days* (765–828) – we must take note of 'the days from Zeus' (765).

Times of year we tell by our astronomical clock, watching the constellations which Zeus himself has fixed in heaven as signs to us. This is what Aratus tells us in his *Phaenomena*, a work of the third century BC consciously building on the work of Hesiod 400 years earlier. The Greek word for a sign is *sema* and revealingly it also becomes the word for a constellation.

This leads us to a form of expression in the epic which takes 'day' into the realm of fate. Homer speaks of such things as the 'due day (for death), evil day, pitiless day, day of slavery, day of freedom, day of return' (Schwabl 1978: 1022). It is Zeus who manages these key days, which determine our own thoughts and behaviour if we are to believe the disguised Odysseus:[44]

> The thinking of men on earth is such
> as the day that the father of men and gods brings on.
>
> Homer, *Odyssey* 18.136f.

There are indeed moments when we wish to attribute our thoughts to others. Clearest in this regard is the apology of Agamemnon to Achilles in the *Iliad*:[45]

> '. . . I am not responsible,
> but Zeus and Moira [the destiny he allots] and the Erinys [vengeful demon] that walks in the mist,
> who at the assembly implanted wild *ate* [destructiveness] in my mind
> on the day on which I myself took his prize [Briseis] from Achilles.'
>
> Homer, *Iliad* 19.86–9

It is his own fault that he is describing, and he knows it. But it is how the world is, it is Zeus.

If Zeus sends signs by weather and by the stars, and if he manages the whole course of human life, then it makes sense that he should sometimes communicate with men in various indirect ways to express his will. Messages come from him, borne by Hermes in the *Odyssey* and Iris in the *Iliad*. Iris is the rainbow, a beautiful icon of the gods' communication with man. Zeus sends dreams too, such as the one that misleads Agamemnon in *Iliad* 2. 'Let us send', says Achilles (*Iliad* 1.62f.), 'for a diviner or a priest, or a dream-interpreter – for dreams too are from Zeus.'

When we think of oracles we think of Apollo and Delphi. But Zeus too had oracles, at Dodona and Olympia. We first hear of Dodona from Achilles as he prays to a very distinctive Zeus:

> Zeus lord, Dodonaian, Pelasgian, dwelling afar,
> ruling over wintry Dodona; and around you the Selloi
> dwell, the interpreters, unwashed their feet, their bed on the ground!
>
> *Iliad* 16.233–5

This is the principal oracle of Zeus in classical times. The Selloi are an archaic priesthood, bound by ancestral tabus. Their unmediated contact with the ground has a number of parallels including those with the equally antique and tabu-ridden priest of Jupiter in Rome, the Flamen Dialis. The site itself goes back a long way: remnants have been found of Late Mycenaean pottery and of wooden huts.[46] Here, thanks

to the rustling of Zeus's sacred Oak and the work of the Doves, presumably priestesses, the will of Zeus and his wife Dione may be ascertained by states or by those who wondered whether to keep sheep, emigrate or find a stolen piece of cloth. At least they might find out which god or hero it is best to pray to.

Oracles, however, are an unusual tool in Zeus's otherwise indirect and distant management of the universe. The oracle at Olympia was dead by the time of Pausanias (*c.* AD 150) and only appears once or twice in the historical record, though these mentions are interesting. We hear of its being manoeuvred outrageously by King Agesilaos of Sparta in 388 BC (Xenophon, *Hellenica* 4.7). Agesilaos asked it to allow him to refuse a sacred truce offered by the Argives, and, having succeeded, went to Delphi and asked Apollo if he agreed with his father (Zeus). Apollo had to say yes – this was after all the god who had cried:

> Give me my lyre and my curving bow!
> And I shall deliver to men the unfailing will of Zeus!
>
> 'Homer', *Hymn to Apollo* 131f.

A second item of interest is found in Plutarch's *Life of Agis* (§11, *c.* AD 100). Every nine years the Spartan ephors would watch the skies for a shooting star and, if they saw one, suspend the kings until an oracle from Delphi or Olympia allowed them to resume. This echoes the way in which every nine years Minos had to converse with Zeus (see Chapter 4). Kingship is something that runs out and needs to be restored from its source, Zeus.

With his control of day-by-day events, Zeus is naturally the god of decisive moments. Victory (*Nike*) and the supreme means of achieving it, the thunderbolt, are embedded in his iconography (see Chapter 1). This applies both to war and to sport, the means of training warriors. At Olympia they even sang in honour of the thunderbolt:[47]

> Following previous beginnings,
> now too we shall sing loudly the so-named joy of proud victory,
> the thunderbolt,
> the fire-thrown weapon
> of thunder-raising Zeus,

> the blazing bolt that fits
> every success.
>
> Pindar, *Olympian Ode* 10.78–83

Greeks were sensitive to the point at which the fortune of battle shifted or *turned*. The word for this was *trope* (usually translated 'rout') and the god who determined the point at which the battle turned was of course Zeus *Tropaios*. To celebrate this, a dedication was made, usually at the very spot, called a *tropaion*, which leads to our word 'trophy'. *Tropaion* is however an adjective and applies to the *bretas*, the crude wooden statue that trophies in effect were. In their simpler form they were made from an oak tree roughly lopped of its branches, with the captured weapons displayed on it, just as ancient Germanic tribes displayed sacrificed prisoners on trees. These distinctive monuments were set up primarily to Zeus Tropaios, though of course dedications could be made to any god. Once set up it was tabu to move them. They evidently constituted a fully dedicated religious place.[48]

OVERVIEW

In this chapter we have seen the links between the sky god and the god who controls life and the universe. The control of weather and its unexpected changes, particularly the mighty exhibitions of thunder and lightning and blackening of the skies, joins seamlessly with the control of time, day by day, and the unexpected changes this brings to our lives. Yet behind all is the unrivalled power of the god whose realm is the fiery ether into which only the tallest mountains reach. Zeus receives honour high up mountains, and processions of needy mortals will on occasion make their way there to do him reverence. But he is always in the background determining the due time for everything and in so doing deciding the outcome of battles as of everything else.

4

ZEUS AND THE ORDER OF SOCIETY

ATHENS

Athens, the city for which we have the best evidence, did not exploit Zeus as much as many other states, but even here we can see ways in which Zeus subtly orders society.

Heading out of Athens, across the River Kephisos, is an altar of Zeus *Meilichios*, 'the gentle', a worrying word in Greek religion, because what is at issue is purification and release from *miasma*, religious pollution. This altar is where the great hero of Athens, its king Theseus, was once cleansed of his killings (Pausanias 1.37.4) and it was the site of the Diasia, the major Zeus festival in Athens. The story goes (Thucydides 1.126) that Cylon had attempted a coup d'état around 632 BC and had been advised by the Delphic oracle, in one of those legendary ambiguous responses, that he should carry out his plans during the major festival of Zeus. It is remarkable that Cylon in this legend thinks not of his home Athens but of the Olympic Games, which is why his coup fails. The less obvious answer, closer to home, was that the *Diasia*, held on the 23rd of Anthesterion, in late March, was the major *Athenian* festival of Zeus. In this festival all the Athenian districts ('demes') united in worship. Most people made the so-called 'local offerings', namely baked animal shapes, but those that could afford them sacrificed real pigs, though they did not feast on the meat because in this case the whole animal was to be burnt; it was a 'holocaust' in the Greek technical sense, as was appropriate to gods of the underworld.

The festival was described in antiquity as 'performed with a certain loathsomeness' and accompanied by grim expressions. This was the public side. Domestically, it was a day of family meals, hospitality and of giving children presents. Thus it was like holding Good Friday and Easter on the same day, and indeed it was much the same time of year. So Zeus Meilichios, god of the grim forces from which one seeks purification, was also a god of joy and warmth, whose worship intertwines, as one can see from the remains of cult, with that of Zeus Philios ('of friendship')[49] and Zeus Soter ('who saves'). His depiction is often as a snake, a creature of the earth – which contains the dead and propagates the new. The sense of the ending of a year seems to belong with this festival – February in Rome was a month of purifications so that their new year might begin with the spring month of March. The Diasia has something of this feel, and the local communities, meeting outside the city, on its margins, may have returned to their city and their demes invigorated.

Some have thought that the Meilichios functions are so separate from others that they originally belonged to a separate god (cf. Nilsson 1967: i.412, 414). But Zeus is the overseer of the whole world order and is the special protector of its compartments and structures, like the demes in this case. Killing disrupts the structure and so he is the god from whom purification may appropriately be sought. This is the same Zeus who protects suppliants (Zeus Hikesios), who will uphold the relationships of friendship (Zeus Philios) and guest-friendship (Zeus Xenios).

Zeus may also oversee the entrance of boys into the male community as they cross from childhood and the community's structure is changed. A phratry is the 'brotherhood' of adult men into which new entrants are incorporated and is the only context in which Greek uses the Indo-European word for 'brother', also ours. In Athens we know that Zeus Phratrios and Athene Phratria were worshipped and there were some precincts, maybe including a state super-precinct, and that phratries proudly worshipped varying gods, such as Zeus Xenios, Apollo Patroos ('ancestral'), Apollo Hebdomeios ('of the number seven'). Quite how this all adds up, we do not know, but it may well be that all phratries were engaged in the worship of both the normal gods and their own special gods. What we hear is that Zeus

Phratrios played a central part in the enrolment process: to oppose the enrolment you might 'take the sacrificial victim away from the altar'; to carry it through on the other hand you had to 'take a voting pebble from the altar of Zeus Phratrios while the victims were burning'.[50] Clearly the electricity that powers changes in status and the alteration of the adult male community must flow uninterrupted from Zeus Phratrios.

ZEUS CENTRAL

Please consult map 1.

Among other Greek peoples Zeus was the central god. He had a special role when particular sets of cities and tribes united to express their common identity.

Every four years the people of the areas of Elis and Pisa, as well as Triphylia, a people supposedly sacred to Zeus, assembled at midsummer at the time of a full moon for a festival notable for its games. The festival took place at a cult site which goes back to Mycenaean times and was known as the *Olympia*, the festival of Zeus Olympios. The Olympic Games were so powerful a gathering of the athletic young, all competing to display their prowess, that the festival exceeded the boundaries of the state and the whole of Greece was invited. This is why we describe this festival as *panhellenic* ('all-Greek'). What started as a local festival of shared identity came to be a place where the whole of Greece could express its common ideals, something of which has been carried over into the modern Olympic Games.

The primary force behind this festival was centripetal and multitribal from the beginning. Comparable in intention was the annual meeting of the 12 divisions of the Achaeans to deal with matters of common interest, who met near Aigion at a grove of Zeus called *Amarion* (probably 'Meeting-place') where Zeus Amarios presided over the assembly-cum-festival.[51] This is a familiar structure among the Indo-European peoples: in the case of Germanic tribes, the unificatory meeting of sub-tribes is called the 'Thing'. There is also a tendency to divisions into 12 (Dowden 2000: 278, 282–4). Even the Etruscans met in this way. To modern political eyes, this is the annual

meeting of a 'league' or 'federation', but this may be more of a recreation of the tribe from its first origins, from the womb, and a recreation of its identity, something which required a powerful sacrifice – there are persistent reports of human sacrifice at such Germanic and Slavonic meetings.

Greek mythology associates human sacrifice with some Zeus sites, though it looks as if it was not actually practised in historical times. When the Messenians finally escaped Spartan subjection in 369 BC, Ithome became the citadel of the town Messene, and Zeus Ithomatas was adopted as their principal god. In the nature of national identities, this is likely to have been hallowed by tradition. But Zeus of Ithome is also the god to whom a Christian writer (Clement, *Protrepticus* 3) alleges that 'King Aristomenes the Messenian' sacrificed the King of the Spartans, Theopompos, and 300 of their warriors, apparently way back in the eighth century BC. If there is anything in this story, it might refer not simply to an atrocity, or war crime in our terms, but also to an early custom, paralleled in Germanic culture, of sacrificing enemy troops. This would then point us to another Zeus cult in which human sacrifice had its part in asserting the identity of a super-tribe. This key cult was proud of its fine bronze statue from early in the fifth century BC, the work of Hageladas of Argos. This statue was an emblem on its later coinage, which gives some idea of its centrality to Messenian identity.

The most celebrated site where human sacrifice is supposed to have occurred is in southern Arcadia on Mt Lykaion, which 'other Arcadians call Olympus or the Sacred Mountain' (Pausanias 8.38.2). Here they made their way up between two massive pillars surmounted by gilded eagles, the particular companion of Zeus Lykaios as we see on coins, past the sanctuary that no man might enter on pain of stoning, up to the altar, an artificial mound 30 m in diameter and 1.5 m high on the very summit of the mountain. Here, with the whole Peloponnese spread out before them, they would sacrifice to Zeus Lykaios 'in secret; and it was not a pleasant idea for me to ask any more questions about the sacrifice. Let it be as it is and as it was from the beginning' (Pausanias 8.38.7). In Ovid (*Metamorphoses* 1) we find the story that the king Lycaon had slain a prisoner and served him to Zeus and was punished by being transformed into a wolf. But there is also a story

(Plato, *Republic* 565d) that if a person tasted human flesh mixed with meat at the shrine of Zeus Lykaios, he would be turned into a wolf. The story is developed in Pausanias (8.2.6):

> Indeed they say that since Lykaon someone regularly turns from man into wolf at the sacrifice of Zeus Lykaios, but he does not become a wolf for life. While he is a wolf, provided he abstains from human meat, in the tenth year thereafter, they say, he again becomes a man instead of a wolf. But if he tastes it he always remains a beast.

The third-century BC writer Apollas knew of a person who had done just this, something to which Pliny the Elder (8.82) reacts with exasperation:

> It is amazing just how far Greek gullibility can go – there is no lie so outrageous that it lacks someone to testify to it. So, Apollas, who wrote the *Victors at Olympia*, tells how Demaenetus the Parrhasian was at the sacrifice that the Arcadians were still then doing for Zeus Lykaios with human victims. He tasted the entrails of the sacrificed boy and turned into a wolf. The same was in the tenth year restored and trained as an athlete for the boxing and left Olympia a victor.

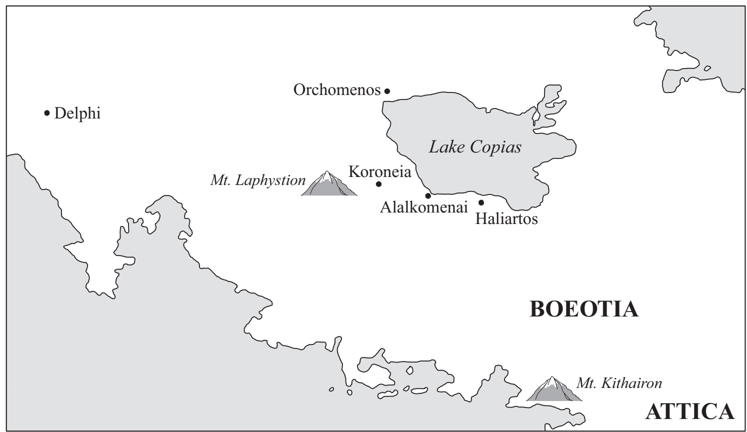
However, archaeologists have found no human bones and, for all the claims and insinuations, no one witnessed either a metamorphosis or a human sacrifice. Here at what was once the great centralising festival of the local Arcadians, a boy was ritually made into a wolf – just as in myth at Argos, Io became a cow, and in ritual young girls at Brauron in Attica became 'bears'. This is a special type of priesthood held by a young person making the transition from childhood to adulthood. It is not so far from the world of Zeus Phratrios, guarding the boundaries of the adult community.

Mt Lykaion is not particularly near a town, except Megalopolis (15 km away), which was founded in 368/7 to unite the Parrhasian Arcadians in their 40 hamlets into a force that could resist the Spartans from whom they had just been freed. This cult of Zeus Lykaios had previously been their vehicle of identity and unity and now it increasingly found a purpose as a focus for all Arcadians, proud to be Arcadians rather than just the inhabitants of this or that town.

Appropriately, Zeus was guarantor of both these Arcadians and the Messenians of Mt Ithome against the Spartans. It becomes clear, however, that these are genuine choices when we see that Megalopolis and its effective territory of Parrhasia were Zeus-worshippers, but Mantinea, further away in Arcadia, maintained a deliberately distinct identity through its devotion instead to Poseidon. A branch of the Mt Lykaion cult was also set up in the city of Megalopolis, a pattern we shall see repeated below (Koroneia). We must envisage these communities as uniting in their worship of Zeus at the festival of the Lykaia – perhaps around April – and its games, which followed the normal pattern of men's events and boys' events by the time we learn about them and had their own hippodrome. Werewolf stories are only a quaint echo of what this cult meant to its participants.[52]

A similar situation arises with the cult of Zeus *Laphystios*, Zeus the 'Devourer'. On his altar, on Mt Laphystion, 20 stades from Koroneia (Boeotia), Athamas was going to sacrifice Phrixos and Helle before the ram with the golden fleece rescued them. And legend associates the lands of Orchomenos, Koroneia and Haliartos with each other and with this mountain, evidently a major focus for their identity – and that of the 'Pan-Boeotians' – as expressed through cult. Schachter (1994: iii.105) refers to the Zeus of Koroneia as the 'pan-Boeotian ethnic god' and thinks that he appears on several Boeotian coins. The cult of Zeus Laphystios, and the story of the intended sacrifice of Phrixos, is also found at Halos in Thessaly, looking over the Pagasaean Gulf towards Mt Pelion. Given the southwards migration of the Boeotians, the cult probably originates there in their original homeland and is part of a pattern of bringing old names to new places. The same profile emerges in both locations of the pairing of town and mountain: at Koroneia and Mt Laphystion; at Halos and Mt Pelion, where there was a cult of Zeus Akraios ('of the peak') – another title borne by Zeus Laphystios at Koroneia. The shrine of Zeus Akraios on Mt Pelion doubled as the shrine (cave) of Cheiron the Centaur and, as we have seen, the sons of Thessalian nobles went there annually dressed in ramskins,[53] distant cousins of Athenians worshipping Zeus Phratrios.

In later editions of his *Golden Bough*, Sir James Frazer used the tale of Athamas' attempted sacrifice of Phrixos as yet another piece of



Map 3 Cities of Boeotia

evidence for his view that once there had been a widespread custom of creating priest-kings for a period until finally they were sacrificed.[54] We may not believe Frazer any more, but the human sacrifices which seem merely symbolic in Greek myth and cult – on some of our views play-acting the end of youth so that adulthood may begin – look more likely to have once actually happened when we look beyond the Greeks to other nations. Zeus Devourer may indeed once have been a sinister god.

More marginal were the Nemean Games, every two years in honour of Zeus *Nemeios* – marginal because Nemea was not much of a place: it belonged to Cleonae, on the other side of the Pierced (*Tretos*) Pass through the mountains from Argos. Here too, under the authority of Zeus, a panhellenic festival developed from what may have been the towns around a mountain coming together for worship and sport: a little to the north, there is Mt Apesas where Zeus Apesantios was first worshipped by Perseus, the founder-hero of Mycenae (Pausanias 2.15.3), itself on the Argive side of the Pierced Pass. Thus the Nemean Games may originally not have been so different from the other festivals we have looked at in this section, and once again we see a panhellenic festival emerging from the sense of shared culture between local populations.

KINGS AND THE JUSTICE OF ZEUS

Zeus lord . . .

Iliad 3.351 – three times in Homer

Lord of lords, most blest
of the blest and most accomplishing [*teleiotaton*]
of ends [*telos*], happy Zeus . . .

Aeschylus, *Suppliant Women* 524–6

Zeus, as we saw earlier, is father of gods and men. But he is also their lord (*anax*) and king (*basileus*). We celebrate Greece for its invention of democracy, but other forms of government were common. Usually, in fact, Greek states were ruled by an oligarchy. But kingship did not have to wait for the Kings of Macedon and the successors of Alexander the Great. They are everywhere in Homer – from a lord, i.e. great king, Agamemnon, to the kings, for example minor kings, eg Diomedes. And Homeric kings rest on the reality of kings in Greek society – both in the Late Bronze Age in the palaces of Mycenaean Greece and Minoan Crete, and in the Dark Age and the beginnings of Archaic Greece.

Homer would agree with Hesiod that 'kings are from Zeus' just as bards are from the Muses and Apollo (*Theogony* 94–6). That is why kings or princes such as Patroclus, Ajax, Agamemnon, Menelaus and, most frequently, Odysseus are described by Homer as *Zeus-born* (*diogenes*). Herakles on the other hand is described as 'Zeus-born' because he is. In the case of kings, you can if you wish explain this by the supposition that the king's line goes back to Zeus, but that only re-expresses what the epithet amounts to: kings rule with an authority that comes from Zeus. And as his managers, they are also subject to surprise audits, as we will see below. A king is also *diotrephes* – nourished by Zeus, reared and made into who he is by Zeus.[55] These are quite emphatic epithets and we must not think they just mean vaguely 'divinely favoured' – the word for 'god' in Greek is *theos* and the Greeks do not have any of the Latin *di* or *deus*-shaped words that I think we sometimes subconsciously and wrongly hear in these Greek epithets. *Dio*- means Zeus.

If authority derives from Zeus, it must also, on occasion, be renewed from Zeus. Nine years seems to be the cycle. According to Odysseus (*Odyssey* 19.178f.) Minos used to be or become king every nine years, 'he who communed with great Zeus'. According to a dialogue attributed to Plato (*Minos* 319e) he had to give an account of his rule to Zeus every nine years and learn more. This seems to fit with a pattern of renewal of the whole of society which had once been practised by the Indo-European cultures (Dowden 2000: 286 and ch. 14 *passim*; Schwabl 1978: 1394). Divine renewal, and Zeus as its source, is one aspect that has had a long shelf life. It reappears in the case of the Spartan kings, as we have seen.

Before the development of states in the contemporary sense, there was no codification of law; law was therefore owned by individual leaders. So it is that in Homer and Hesiod kings hear law cases and issue judgments (*themistes, dikai*). It is then a matter of concern whether those judgments are 'straight' or 'crooked'. As Zeus is a projection in heaven of kings on earth, it follows that he is responsible for the declaring of justice and its implementation, so long as we bear in mind that this is not Christian or philosopher's justice, but rough and ready managerial justice.[56]

In the *Odyssey* we learn that gods unspecified walk the earth in the shape of strangers to check up on men's respect for law (17.485–7). In Hesiod (*Works and Days* 248–55) it is eerier: three myriad immortals (i.e. 30,000 of them, but he wasn't counting), cloaked in mist, police mortal men; but these mortal men are kings, because the three myriad immortals, Zeus's 'guards', are checking up on their standards of justice. This story of a divine inspection of mortals has parallels in Near-Eastern cultures: the Persian god Mithra supervised contracts, and the Hebrew God with two companions visited righteous Abraham and Sarah and, next stop, the unjust towns of Sodom and Gomorrah (*Genesis* 18–19, 21).[57] These similarities are not coincidental: they form part of a pattern of cultural borrowing from the East. But here and now in Greek culture this has become Zeus's role, and this is what matters, to manage justice by mysterious intervention and inspection. It is not just battles but the whole dispensation of human life that is controlled by Zeus.

Modern writers have tried to claim that the *Odyssey* has a different view from the *Iliad* and that Hesiod is different again. Increasingly, however, we can see that it is the particular character of each work rather than changing Greek conceptions that are at issue. The story of a man's return against all the odds generally puts different demands on its gods than a tragedy set on the battleplains of Troy (Lloyd-Jones 1971: 30–32). And Hesiod's *Works and Days* weighs in with moral severity to create its distinctive atmosphere. This is shown for instance by a passage in which Homer's *Iliad* can turn to Hesiodic concepts of justice and an Odyssean sense of respect for the gods:

> . . . as when the black earth is all weighed down in by pelting rain
> on an autumn day, when water is poured out torrentially
> by Zeus, when he is annoyed and enraged at men
> who use violence in the agora to deliver crooked judgments
> and drive out *dike*, without any respect for the gods.
>
> *Iliad* 16.383–8

Here Homer enjoys adding a dash of Hesiodic colour to his epic, neatly quarantined in the alternative register of the simile.[58]

The ground is already laid for Zeus as manager of mortal lives in the remarkable scene at the beginning of the *Odyssey* where Zeus speaks (1.29–38):

> He had been thinking in his spirit about doughty Aegisthus
> whom Agamemnon's son far-famed Orestes had killed.
> That is what was in his mind when he uttered words among the immortals:
> 'Oh dear, how mortals blame the gods!
> They say that misfortune comes from us, when they themselves
> By their own recklessness suffer grief beyond measure [*moros*]
> Take how Aegisthus recently beyond measure married
> Agamemnon's wooed wife and killed him on his return
> Knowing full well it meant sheer destruction – because we had already told him
> Sending Hermes . . .

There is an order in things and a due 'measure' or 'proportion' (*moros*), which is monitored by Zeus and about which he worries. This is not

fate, though: the word usually translated as fate, *moira*, is a related word denoting that proportion, or the divine power that dispenses it, the 'Fates' in a soft sense. Zeus, according to this view, does not blast Aegisthus with a thunderbolt – he simply warns because he knows the order of things, that Aegisthus will have it coming to him.

This is the scene on which, 600 or so years later, Ovid builds the opening action of the *Metamorphoses* (1.163ff.). His gods stride along the Milky Way into a 'Palatine in the sky' to hear Jupiter, the Roman Zeus. Jupiter reports with outrage how Lycaon, King of Arcadia, has wickedly tried first to kill him, then to feed him human meat. Ovid's poetic décor is elaborate: Lycaon's house is brought down by 'avenging flame' (1.230), namely the thunderbolt; Lycaon changes into a baying wolf; and the earth is destroyed in the great flood, the cataclysm. But it remains a case of the gods patrolling the earth in disguise, a motif which also appears, in more of an Abraham-and-Sarah mode, in the story of Philemon and Baucis (8.617ff.). Ovid did not invent these stories and it appears that the tale of Zeus's entertainment by Lycaon goes all the way back to a pseudo-Hesiodic text, though one that no longer survives (Hesiod, *fr*. 163 Merkelbach-West; see West 1997: 123). That means it was probably circulating as one of the works badged 'Hesiod' by the mid sixth century BC.

Hesiod preaches the tough justice of Zeus. Pandora opens the box of evils, showing mortal weakness and the particular weakness, in a man's mythology, of woman. This is, however, simultaneously the order that Zeus has laid down and Hesiod concludes that 'there is no way to escape the mind of Zeus' (*Works and Days* 105), just as he comments later (483f.):

> The mind of Zeus, holder of the *aigis*, varies from time to time
> and it is painful for mortal men to understand.

Hesiod's Zeus does more than just set up the world. He monitors the ways of men and replaces each age of men with the next (*Works and Days*, e.g. 140, 144, 158). When the day comes he will destroy our age as well (180), though in his wisdom he is not quite at the point of doing that, we hope (273). The behaviour of kings and their administration of justice is a special concern of Hesiod's in *Works and Days*. This is

what 'wide-seeing' Zeus (*euryopa*, 229, 239), or the 'all-seeing eye of Zeus' (267), is monitoring through a variety of agents, whether Justice (*Dike*, a maiden who is born of Zeus, 256), Oath (*Horkos*) or the 30,000 spirits. Whole cities perish around unjust rulers (240).

We should not think that Greeks were particularly literal-minded about their mythology. Zeus hurls no thunderbolts in Homer (except at Odysseus' ship, a relatively realistic setting) and he influences the human world in an altogether more subtle way, depicted by the poet as the operation of a family of gods. Homer always tones down the mythic register. Everyone presumably knew from the lost epic *Thebaids* that Kapaneus had exhibited contempt for the gods when he was one of the Seven Against Thebes and that he was in consequence personally smitten by Zeus's bolt. He is mentioned a number of times in the *Iliad* and Homer positions a son of his, whom he calls Sthenelos ('Strongman'), next to Diomedes in the *Iliad*, to tempt his audience to recall the reckless bravado of Kapaneus and to allow Diomedes in contrast to state the new morality that had led to the success of his new generation – the *Epigonoi* or 'Successors' – in their quest to capture Thebes:

> We actually captured the seat of seven-gated Thebes,
> the two of us leading a smaller host against better walls,
> putting our trust in the portents of the gods and the aid of Zeus
> – where *they* perished from their own recklessness.
>
> *Iliad* 4.406–9

The audience knows the unmentioned thunderbolt story but maybe Homer doesn't take it too literally. What matters is that leaders understand the justice of Zeus. That is why Diomedes is called Diomedes, 'Counsel of Zeus'.

HISTORICAL KINGS

Kings largely disappeared from the Greek scene during the Dark Age. The most notable exceptions were in Macedonia and at Sparta. In Sparta they retained a pair of kings, something which seems to be

reflected in the twin Dioskouroi whose home was Sparta. Elsewhere, power was levelled out and passed to aristocratic oligarchies with occasional interruptions in the Archaic Age (776–480 BC) by 'tyrants', a sort of dictator. Such tyrants were of necessity alert to their public image, and keen for instance on building programmes. It is no coincidence that Cylon's abortive attempt to seize power in Athens (above p. 65) was associated in legend with a festival of *Zeus*.

Indeed, the role of Zeus at Athens might have been different if the sixth-century BC tyranny of Peisistratos and his sons had survived longer. Apparently on the foundations of a substantial earlier temple they had begun a temple of Zeus Olympios. The original temple had been built, it was said (Pausanias 1.18.7f.), by Deucalion, the Greek Noah, and the fissure was still shown where the flood waters disappeared and a new world had been created – a world which, as the neighbouring temple of Kronos and Rhea serves to remind us, was under the new régime of Zeus. But the half-finished new temple became for later generations 'a symbol of arrogant Pisistratid display' (Parker 1996: 68). Assertion of monarchic authority through the image of Zeus became problematic in the formative years following the fall of the tyranny (510) and the testing times of the war against the Persian Great Kings Darius (490) and Xerxes (481–79): in Greek, the 'king' usually referred to the King of Persia – it was a word in exile, because Greeks had law and freedom, not kingship and slavery (Herodotus 7.101–4). This attitude privileged instead the divinity of the Acropolis, Athene, for whom the democracy constructed her Parthenon and its environment – though not without acknowledging the background presence of Zeus Hypatos ('most high') with an altar next to the Erechtheion that received only cakes (Pausanias 1.26.4). It would not be until the king of Syria Antiochus Epiphanes (148–138 BC) that there was further work on the temple of Olympian Zeus, or until the Emperor Hadrian that an Athens now long comfortable with monarchy gratefully saw it completed and furnished with a colossal ivory and gold statue (Pausanias 1.18.6).

In Macedonia, Zeus was held to be the father of Macedon himself, just as Woden was the ancestor of the Anglo-Saxon kings, and there was perhaps more prominent cult of Zeus in Macedonia than elsewhere.[59] With Alexander the Great's conquests (334–323 BC), royalty

returned to huge areas of the Greek world and the Egyptian and Near-Eastern monarchic worlds now became part of the enlarged Greek world. Just as Peisistratos had sought to express his sovereignty through a new temple of Zeus Olympios at Athens, now the kings who succeeded Alexander – Ptolemies in Egypt, Seleucids in Syria and, rather later, the Attalids in Pergamon found uses for Zeus in their projection of their power. So for instance when ruler cult was created among the Greek kings of Syria and Babylon, Zeus was called into service. This started with Antiochus I's deification of his father Seleucus in 280: an inscription from the reign of Seleucus IV (187–175) reveals there was a priest of Seleucus Zeus *Nikator*, 'Victor', together with Antiochus Apollo *Soter*, 'Saviour' (Nilsson 1974: ii.167). Zeus and his son Apollo modelled the world of earthly sovereigns.

The huge altar of Zeus at Pergamon (now in Berlin), one of the glories of Hellenistic sculpture and certainly the largest surviving work, was erected by the Greek king Attalos I. The cult of this city intertwined the worship of Zeus with reverence for the kings in many ritual ways. The message of the altar is that Attalos, through his defeat of the Gauls in 226 BC and creation of this powerful new state based on Pergamon, had repeated the battles of Zeus which established the current order. In the sculpture, fine 'dying Gauls' echo Giants defeated by Zeus and Athene. In this way Attalos also attached Pergamon to the cultural heritage of Athens, where he made dedications of sculpture on similar themes.

Kingship, then, continued to be supported by Zeus, just as emperors and kings in late antiquity and in Europe would be specially protected by the Christian God.

THE NEEDS OF OUTSIDERS: STRANGER, SUPPLIANT, OATH

We turn now from order within societies to international conventions. Homer's *Odyssey* proclaims the need to respect not only the bonds that are internal to society, but also those that protect outsiders and ensure that different states and their inhabitants have the means to coexist with each other. Zeus guarantees all bonds of friendship as Zeus Philios and, above all, these inter-state bonds, as a sort of

religious Red Cross. Nausicaa knows that 'All *xenoi* and beggars are from Zeus' (*Odyssey* 6.207f.), a line which Odysseus himself picks up at 14.251 and which, a millennium later, was a favourite line of the pagan emperor Julian when he hammered home the point that pagans should not leave Christians a monopoly on charity.[60] *Xenia* is the relationship of reciprocal hospitality between persons of different states, and both parties are known as a *xenos*, regardless of who is the host and who the guest on any particular occasion. To ask which is the guest is like asking which of two friends is the recipient of a good turn. Zeus Xenios, then, enforces respect for these relationships. This is why Nausicaa's statement is tinged with the worry that the *xenos* may be a god in disguise, inspecting the earth, precisely as we see at *Odyssey* 17.485–7 when there is talk of 'gods in the form of foreign *xenoi*'. This is also why Odysseus, even though he knows in his heart that Polyphemos is a savage, still appeals to him:

> . . . but we, reaching your knees,
> have arrived as suppliants, in the hope you might provide us with a *xenion* or in some other way
> give us a gift, which is the *themis* [religious right] of *xenoi*.
> Be respectful, my good man, of the gods: we are your suppliants [*hiketai*].
> And Zeus is avenger of suppliants and *xenoi*,
> Zeus Xenios, who stands beside respectful *xenoi*.
>
> *Odyssey* 9.266–71

A whole culture underlies this passage: the 'arriver' (*hiketes*) is the Greek for a suppliant and he performs the ritual of supplication by getting down and grasping the knees of the person supplicated; the *xenion* is a present whose giving solemnly creates the bond of guest-friendship and the obligation, when possible, to reciprocate; and *themis* is the uninfringeable divine law or order, quite different from the *dike*, the order or justice that a good ruler or a good society maintains. Zeus can be Zeus Hikesios, Zeus Xenios; he has children by *Themis*. It is a terrible sin, requiring expiation, when a person kills a *xenos*. So for instance Herakles killed his *xenos* Iphitos:

> It is said that Zeus, appalled at the *xenos*-killing, instructed Hermes to take Herakles and sell him as *dike* [in effect, 'penalty'] for the murder. He took him to

> Lydia and sold him to the queen of the place, Omphale, at a price of three talents. The story is in Pherekydes.
>
> Pherekydes of Athens, *FGrH* 3F82

Thus there are conventions and there are sanctions which can only be exercised by god. Nowhere is this truer than in the case of oaths. The mightiest, and most persuasive, oath is naturally by the mightiest god and Zeus Horkios (of oaths, *horkoi*) is its guarantor:

> The statue of Zeus in the Council-Chamber [at Olympia] is the most terrifying of all the statues of Zeus to unjust men. He is called Horkios and has a thunderbolt in either hand.
>
> Pausanias 5.24.9

Double thunderbolts strike fear into the oath-taker who perjures himself next to the statue as he swears over slices of boar's flesh, just as in the great oath of Agamemnon at *Iliad* 19.258: 'Let Zeus know first, of gods the highest and best'. Oaths were not always by Zeus and he was in any case often combined with forces of earth and sea (e.g. Ge and Poseidon), but if an oath was worth swearing it was often worth swearing by him. Thus the thunderbolt stood for the deadly recoil of ultimate power taken in vain by those who did not understand the world's order.

ZEUS IN THE HOME: PRAYING, DRINKING AND SWEARING

The bard Phemius is anxious to avoid Odysseus killing him. One option he considers in order to achieve this objective is to claim asylum:

> to go out of the *megaron* and sit at the altar of great Zeus
> *Herkeios*, a properly made altar where many
> were the thighs of oxen that Laertes and Odysseus had burnt.
>
> *Odyssey* 22.334–6

So the geography is clear: this Greek palace, like any Greek house, has its living room (*megaron*) and outside, a fenced area (*herkos* is a

boundary fence, or the area so enclosed) with an altar of Zeus of the Fenced-off Area (*Herkeios*). This is where the family would do its sacrifices and is the outward-facing religious point in the house, to which in this case a suppliant flees. Zeus is the ultimate father of the family and head of household, reflecting the key person in the home, the *oikos*, in Greece. Like an Agamemnon or an Odysseus, the head of household would sacrifice at his altar of paternal Zeus Herkeios, though it may be doubted whether epic oxen thighs would be much in evidence, rather than sheep or pig. In the simpler rustic surroundings of Eumaios's hut, however, there is no altar and the pig is sacrificed indoors at a blazing hearth (*eschara*, *Odyssey* 14.420). But you can talk about an *eschara* too when you focus on the part of the altar that burns, something which is to the forefront of your mental image, as it is for Pausanias when he describes the slaughter of Priam by Neoptolemos at the *eschara* of Zeus Herkeios.[61] This was a particularly vile and irreligious act.

This is also a defining cult for citizenship. When the suitability of a candidate for *archon* (magistrate at Athens) was scrutinised, Aristotle tells us (*Constitution of the Athenians* 55) that they were asked not only about their fathers' and mothers' families but also about the location of their cult of paternal Apollo or Zeus Herkeios.

Zeus in the house is also frequently known as Zeus *Ktesios* ('of the possessions/stores'), which seems to relate above all to the larder, where a lexicographer says an image of him had to be set up. This then replicates the pattern of household cult known from Roman religion, in which there is a division between the gods of the area of land (*Lar* or plural *Lares*) and the gods of the store cupboard (*Penates*). Close to the latter is the god of the hearth, *Hestia* in Greek (*Vesta* in Latin), though the personal focus is often on Zeus *Ephestios* ('at the hearth'). The Romans also had public Penates as though the state itself were only a large household. This may be the sort of thinking that underlies an altar of Zeus Ktesios in a temple at a large village in Attica or his worship at the Piraeus (the port of Athens), and similar considerations may apply to public worship of Zeus Herkeios, worshipped on the Athenian acropolis itself.[62] Zeus *Ktesios* can be depicted with, or as, a snake, which matches well with the folk views of harmless snakes: they were manifestations of the beneficent spirit of a given

place and should be fed. But you could also make statuettes of Zeus Ktesios at home like this:

> Put a lid on a new two-eared [i.e. handled] *kadiskos* [type of jar], drape its ears with white wool, and from the right shoulder and from the brow dress it with a saffron [mini-robe?], and pour in 'ambrosia'. Ambrosia is pure water, olive-oil, mixed grain – that's what you put in.
>
> Autokleides, *Exegeticon* (fourth/third century BC)
> *FGrH* 353F1, emended

Libations were important in the home too. Hector must first pour a libation to Zeus and the other immortals before he can drink himself (*Iliad* 6.259f.).[63] At parties and social gatherings three bowls of wine would be mixed, none to be touched before a libation. The first libation was, we are told, to Zeus Olympios and the Olympian gods, the second to the heroes (who protect their local people from their graves) and the third, the 'complete' (*teleios*) would be to Zeus Soter – yes, the Zeus responsible for *saving* the state in war as the priesthoods and inscriptions of so many states testify, but also simply 'Zeus saviour third, who guards the home of pious men'.[64] This libation is the exquisite backdrop to the awful words of Clytaemestra as she tells how she killed Agamemnon:

> I strike him twice, and in two wailings
> his limbs give way, and, fallen,
> I put in a third – in votive gratitude to
> the Zeus beneath the earth, *soter*, of the dead.
>
> Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 1384–7

If we had a microphone to catch ancient Greek and Roman speech, we might be struck by the amount of mild swearing that went on. We have already seen how characters in the *Birds* of Aristophanes are always swearing *ne ton Dia* ('By Zeus!'), as they do in all his plays, and occasionally with a bit more emphasis, I think, *ma ton Dia!* Thus their conversational practice reflected practice in major oaths. Socrates was a bit perverse in swearing 'By the Dog' instead, which is a humorous oath by the dog-headed god of Egypt, Anubis. Equally, if you were

appealing to someone, then it was most effective to plead *pros Dios* ('In the name of/for the sake of Zeus'). Romans in this respect were not much different – certainly an expostulatory *pro Iuppiter!* ('oh/wow Jupiter!') is commonplace. Latin *per Iovem* ('In the name of Jupiter!') is not infrequent, though Romans did like to heap up the things in whose name one appealed: 'I beg of you, In the name of gods and men – and my foolishness, and your knees . . .' (Plautus, *Miles Gloriosus* 541).

This sort of expression contributes in its subliminal way to a background noise of piety. It would be interesting to know whether changes in that piety could be measured by changes in the swearing volume. If you set Greek texts of the classical period alongside Greek texts of the imperial period it does look as though something has changed. In Aristophanes, Demosthenes and Plato (fifth-fourth century BC) there is quite a lot of by-Zeusing. In Dio Chrysostom, Plutarch and Lucian (first–second century) there is a good deal less. In Plotinus and Himerius (third–fourth AD) there is none, and in Libanius (fourth AD) it is restricted to the artificial and archaic environment of the declamations. There are really only two possibilities: either literary Greek prose had become divorced from common speech and sentiment; or the by-Zeusing piety had passed away.

The gods infiltrated ordinary life in other ways too, as can be seen from the problems with which the Christian Tertullian wrestles:

> The Law prohibits the naming of pagan gods, but that does not mean to say that we can't pronounce their names when conversation forces us to. You often have to say things like 'you'll find him in the temple of Asclepius', or 'I live in the Isis quarter', or 'he has been appointed priest of Jupiter'. I'm not worshipping Saturn if I call someone by this name, any more than I'm worshipping Marcus if I call someone Marcus.
>
> from Tertullian, *On Idolatry* §20

This may seem obvious enough, but any expert on brainwashing will immediately recognise the insidious effects of this naming culture. The pagan world was all around you: you lived near the temple of Zeus and your Greek friends were very often named after him. They might be 'gift of Zeus', *Diodotos, Diodoros, Zenodotos, Zenodoros, Diozotos*;

or ‘born of Zeus’, *Diogenes*, *Diognetos*; or ‘glory of Zeus’, *Diokles*; or ‘son of glory of Zeus’, *Diokleides*; or ‘beloved of Zeus’, *Diiphilos*, *Diphilos*, *Zenophilos*; or ‘wisdom of Zeus’, *Diomedes*; or ‘honour/worship of Zeus’, *Diotimos*, *Zenotimos* – or *Dieitrephes*, *Diogeiton*, *Diophanes*, *Diophantos*, *Zenobios*, *Diomedon*, *Diopeithes* – or just plain ‘Zeus-o’, *Dion* or *Zenon* like the philosopher Zeno.[65]

And the plant world too bore his name. A carnation is *diosanthos* ‘Zeus’s flower’ (hence the Latin botanical name *dianthus*), and a sweet chestnut is ‘the acorn of Zeus’, *diosbalanos*. A herb, field basil, is *dioselakate*, ‘Zeus’s spindle’, and what better name for a wild flower than *diospogon* ‘Zeus’s beard’?

Other complaints of Tertullian are that contracts required oaths by gods if they were to be enforced, and that foolish well-wishers might *bless* the unfortunate Christian in the name of their gods. Gibbon thought this might refer to a ‘Jupiter bless you’ on sneezing.[66] This could well be right; a poem in the *Greek Anthology* tells us about a certain Proclus:

> . . . nor does he say *Zeu, soson!* [‘Zeus save us!’] if he sneezes: he can’t hear his nose: it’s too far from his ears.
>
> Anonymous, *Greek Anthology* 11.268.3f.

All this, together with continuing reference to ‘Zeus’s rain’ or the habit in late antiquity, maybe modelled on the Christian Lord’s Day, of not working on Thursdays (the day of Jove, *Jovis dies*, *jeudi*) meant that it was no simple matter to eradicate Zeus or Jove from the life and culture of the pagan world (Dowden 2000: 158, 164).

OVERVIEW

There has been a kaleidoscope of practices in this chapter. We started at Athens, where we saw the social cohesion and organisation brought about by Zeus: among his various functions the strangely grim Zeus Meilichios stood out, whom all the demes joyfully assembled to worship as spring began. In other places, at Olympia, or just outside Achaean Aigion, or on Mt Lykaion, Ithome or Laphystion, we saw

whole peoples meeting in all their tribes and subdivisions to assemble their identity; we also saw a grimmer side, with perpetual hints that once there had been human sacrifice. From there we turned to another aspect of the social order, another guarantee for society, namely the special relationship of kings with Zeus, himself the ultimate projection of kingship in heaven. This is a relationship that he specially monitors (just as he monitors the ways of men at large) in order to maintain the 'straightness' of justice and in order to maintain a world that observes due proportion. Real kings become rare in Greece after the Dark Age, but tyrants and Macedonian kings and the Hellenistic monarchs tend to have a special connection with Zeus, which they promote. Finally we turned to the supra-state relationships of reciprocal hospitality and supplication that Zeus oversees and to the oaths that he enforces; and we saw how he even governs the rhythm of familiar and domestic life, from the altar of Zeus Herkeios in the courtyard to swearing and the naming of weeds. Truly Zeus pervades every aspect of human society.

5

THINKING ABOUT ZEUS

THE VISION OF HOMER, AND THE ARCHAIC POETS

If religion is often a serious thing in our modern cultures, it is not surprising if we find it hard to understand the more playful parts of Homer's writing about Zeus. Thetis appeals to Zeus to help her son Achilles; Zeus promises but is worried that this will annoy Hera, who already gives him a hard time for helping the Trojans; indeed Thetis had better go before Hera notices – but he is too late, she already has (*Iliad* 1.517–61). Meanwhile, we think of the story that Zeus only gave up Thetis because her son would be more powerful than his father (p. 46). Now Zeus threatens violence, as though it were a case of wife-beating in heaven, and Hera's son Hephaistos the bronze-smith says gods should not fight over men; he tells how he was flung from heaven by Zeus on an earlier occasion and landed in Lemnos where the 'Sintian men' looked after him. Now, she smiles and the gods roar with 'unquenchable laughter' as they watch lame Hephaistos bustling around serving wine. These are not the stories we tell of gods in modern credal religions ('faiths'). Perhaps the Greeks took their religion less seriously?

But it is not like this. That gods should not fight over men is a cliché, uttered more imposingly by Apollo to Poseidon (*Iliad* 21.463–6). This must be a common epic situation: gods are always actually fighting over men and why they do it is a problem, to Homer and his audiences as well as to us. This is the strange thing about gods, which only Epicurus rejected: despite their lofty status and powers they are still strangely

interested in us. Gods are known to support cities, because otherwise there would be no point in cities paying special reverence to particular gods. Hera accuses Zeus of helping the Trojans, because she supports key Greek states ('Argos, Sparta, and Mycenae with its broad streets', *Iliad* 4.52) and Apollo misleads Achilles in *Iliad* 21 because he supports Troy. If gods support cities and if cities come into conflict, then gods must necessarily fight each other, because if they did not, to whom else would we appeal? No one can doubt that they fight, even if Homer built this up into a grand battle that was too much for Plato and like-minded philosophers to stomach (*Iliad* 20 and 21).

On Lemnos there was a special cult of Hephaistos, who manufactured fire on the peak of Mt Mosychlos (in reality his priests may have used bronze mirrors), and that is why there is a myth of the special obligation Hephaistos owes to the Sinties and of the fall of the fire god to earth. This is not a random invention by Homer but a foundation for, or a reflection of, real cult which he has worked brilliantly into his rhapsodic account of daily quarrels among the gods.

So this scene speaks and it tells us about Zeus. He is the key to how events turn out: if you, Thetis, want a shift in the direction of battle, or if you, Hera, think that the battle is going in the direction of the Trojans, you look to Zeus. His influence is depicted here as based on exceptional brute power of the leading male in the household. But it is not simply that he is a hyperman amongst supermen: he is *different*. We can see this when we look at how precisely he controls the outcome of the battle.

Gods are less visible than we assume: men cannot readily identify them, because they operate in disguise or unseen. And Zeus is different again: not once in the poem does he walk the human earth. He never travels anywhere, except to Mt Ida in *Iliad* 14. His major interventions are to weigh a person's doom in the scales – this is *psychostasia*, 'soul-weighing'. By some unexplained process this is simultaneously the will of Zeus, and failure at the scales precipitates the doom of the unfortunate Sarpedon or Hector. I do not believe that this is something separate, determined by an impersonal force which constrains Zeus, 'fate' – Greeks had no such concept in those days.[67] Rather, his judgment, however human and reluctant in its presentation, is always a matter of weighing and of determining the right time.

Achilles is in no doubt that mortals should look to Zeus for the source of their fortunes and happiness. There are two *pithoi* (massive storage jars) on Zeus's threshold which colourfully embody the world of possible evils and possible successes. He draws from these jars and gives man one of two things – a mixture, or all bad. Such, says Achilles, is human life, that we suffer on the earth and that they up there live without care. This is a window on the harshness of life as it appears to us at blacker times and in blacker moods, and there is a strong feeling of revelation in these lines as the *Iliad* takes stock of itself and raises the question of closure. Like many portraits of how the gods work and what they do, this is not part of a systematic theology – we are offered a piece in a possible jigsaw, a snapshot from the world as it seems at some moments. We do not conclude from such passages that 'the Greeks believed' that your destiny was assigned to you at birth by Zeus, king of the gods. It is simply one way of viewing it.

Poets, particularly in the Archaic period, are fond of gloomy presentations of the gulf between man and gods, something which has led some scholars to talk of an 'archaic world view'.[68] Homer would in fact have been entirely comfortable with these postures. Achilles' pots are the basis of Mimnermos' comments (*c*. 630 BC):

> . . . there is no
> man to whom Zeus does not give many ills.
>
> Mimnermos, *fr*. 2.15f. West

This clear sense that Zeus's influence over events is pervasive and thoroughgoing is underlined a generation later by Alcaeus in a papyrus scrap (*fr*. 39 Lobel-Page), where he appears to be saying that it is not possible for mortal men to escape what is determined and that it was a wise man who said that 'contrary to the fate laid down by Zeus [the *moira* of Zeus] not even a hair' could be moved. A special word for Zeus is *telos* – end, target, completion, fulfilment. This is already embedded in Homer, *Iliad* 1.5, where Zeus's plan was *accomplished* (*eteleieto*). Solon (*c*. 600 BC) complains that men do not think long enough about acts of violence 'but Zeus oversees the *telos* of everything' (*fr*. 13.17 West). And Semonides of Amorgos (*c*. 650 BC), rarely a cheerful writer, hammers home the message:

> Boy, it is Zeus the deep-thundering who holds the *telos*
> of all things that exist and disposes them as he will.
> Men do not have mind, but day by day
> they live the lives cattle do, knowing nothing
> of how the god will bring each thing to fulfilment [*ekteleutesei*].
>
> Semonides of Amorgos, *fr.* 1.1–5 West

Zeus of line 1 has become a rather vaguer 'the god' in line 5. It is worth remembering when you read Greek literature that Zeus is not always named: he is 'the god' par excellence.

Gods are acutely aware of the gulf between us and them, and, looking upon mortals, feel 'disdain mingled with slight pity' (Lloyd-Jones 1971: 3). This reaches classic expression in the astounding climax of the fight over Patroclus' body, when Homer puts centre stage the pair of horses which Achilles inherited from his father Peleus and lent to the now dead Patroclus. They are immortal and, standing bereft on the battlefield, serve to expose the gulf that separates us:

> As the pair of them lamented, the son of Kronos [Zeus] saw them and took pity
> and, moving his head, spoke to his heart:
> 'Poor creatures! Why did we give you two to lord Peleus,
> a mortal, when you are unaging and immortal?
> Was it that you might, amidst men in their wretchedness, suffer grief?
> There is nothing anywhere more lamentable than man
> of all the things that breathe and crawl upon the earth . . .'
>
> Homer, *Iliad* 17.441–7

But the gods, and above all Zeus, are far from the concerns of men, however serious those concerns seem to us. While Achilles and Agamemnon fall out with disastrous consequences, Zeus and Hera's argument, which is meant to be read in the light of that of Achilles and Agamemnon, evaporates into rollicking, almost irresponsible, laughter. The laughter of the gods marks their *difference*. This is how Homer can present Zeus, with calculated paradox, as reacting to the battle between the gods themselves like this:

> He laughed in his heart
> from joy to see the gods coming together in strife.
>
> *Iliad* 21.389f.

Such an apparently shocking comment points to a very different religious sense:

> We ourselves are accustomed to think of the divine being as preoccupied with man and his needs and are little concerned with his existence beyond humanity. But here the spiritual eye seeks a higher world which is no longer troubled for man's sake; and it stands enthralled before the vision of its perfection. Only in a remote reflection are we still able to grasp this vision, but even so it remains powerful. However zealously an Olympian may concern himself for men and their needs, the son of eternity always returns to the majesty of his heavenly splendor. There, in the ethereal heights, there is neither pain nor anxiety, neither age nor death. In the rapture of imperishable youth, beauty, and grandeur they stride through the spaces which shine for them eternally. There they encounter their peers, brothers and sisters, friends and loved ones, and one god takes joy in another, for the splendor of perfection rests upon each figure. To be sure, partisanship for men and peoples sometimes leads to a vigorous argument, but dissension never endures for long, and no day ends without bringing the gods together in festive pleasure for the common enjoyment of their divine existence.
>
> Otto 1954: 129

It was Otto's greatest merit to try to see into that alien idea of religion.

At the same time, we catch in Homer the beginning of a lightness of poetic touch in describing the gods in general and Zeus in particular. Zeus is seduced by Hera in Book 14 of the *Iliad*, overpowered by Sleep (*Hypnos*) and lust (Aphrodite). The whole scene is daring and dazzling, and became deeply offensive to serious-minded philosophers. As the flowers spring up beneath them on Mt Ida ('dewy lotus and saffron and hyacinth, dense and soft', 14.348f.), we students of classical antiquity can learnedly see that the scene has originated in a ritual *hierogamy*, as we saw above (p. 31). That explains where Homer got his tools from, but it does not explain away the rhapsodic licence with which he used them or the cultural collision course he had set up between the poets and the philosophers.

THE PRESOCRATIC THINKERS

> . . . speaking in such a 'serious' way he diverts myths into what he says is mystic discourse about the gods.
>
> Eusebius, *Praeparatio evangelica* 3.pref., talking about Plutarch (*fr.* 157 Sandbach)

Before we turn to the stage, we look at how thinkers had addressed the question of Zeus before the dramatists wrote. The first philosophers, the so-called 'Presocratic' philosophers, in their attempts to think about the nature of the universe and the way it worked, advanced on mythology as we see it in Homer and, above all, Hesiod by constructing a more abstract world, which the gods of myth and cult found it harder to enter. Simultaneously, the quest for more 'scientific' explanation drove them towards fewer first principles, and in theology towards what looks to us like monotheism more than the polytheism of the cultures in which these thinkers lived. When their way of thinking has been digested, its effect is therefore to add weight to the tendency in Greek religion towards 'kathenotheism', thinking about one god as special on some occasions whilst not denying the existence of others. Time and again that special god is Zeus. Though he may lose ground as a mythological being, his special nature, transcending that of the other gods and planning the direction of everything, commends him. Even when he is not mentioned, you can sometimes feel him controlling the shape of philosophers' speculations on the ultimate divinity.

Towards the end of the sixth century BC, Theagenes of Rhegium introduced the philosophical way of saving unacceptable poetic mythology: the battle of the gods in Homer's *Iliad* (Book 20) was an *allegory* for the conflict between the elements that make up the universe. And if Heraclitus (*c.* 500 BC) proposed that the universe was fundamentally an immortal fire (*fr.* B30 *DK*), then it is hard not to think of the *aither*,[69] the special realm of Zeus. So, Heraclitus' statement that 'Thunderbolt steers everything' (*fr.* 64) must tell us about the force of the heavenly fire, effectively allegorising the mythology of Zeus. This sits neatly with the view that 'the One Wise, the only one, is both willing and unwilling to be spoken of by the name of Zeus' (*fr.* 32). Thus the

oneness of Zeus, and his special role distinct from the other gods, enables thinkers from the Presocratics to the last Neoplatonists to associate him with their single, topmost, universe-ordering principle. In the fifth century BC, the Pythagorean Philolaos put this in a geometric way: Zeus was responsible for the angle of the dodecahedron that gave unity to this 12-sided figure, which must reflect the 12 Olympians (*fr*. A14 *DK*). Empedokles, also in the mid fifth century, associated Zeus and Hera with two of the four elements; perhaps Hera was earth rather than air, which became common later, but there is no doubt that Zeus was fire (*fr*. B6 *DK*).

Now that Zeus had been liberated from his human shape and had become the most vital element in the universe, it was possible for a new mystic language to appear. By 500 BC poets had begun composing texts under the name of the mythical Thracian bard 'Orpheus'. One of the early Orphic poems is a hymn to Zeus reflecting his new cosmic role:

> Zeus is first, Zeus of the flashing lightning is last,
> Zeus is the head, Zeus the middle, by Zeus are all things accomplished.
> Zeus is male, Zeus is an immortal nymph,
> Zeus is the foundation of earth and starry heaven . . .
>
> *Orphica fr*. 21a Kern[70]

The first two lines were known to Plato and are discussed in a papyrus from Derveni in Greece dated to the late fourth century BC. This is bold writing, and the strange third line must refer to the power of Zeus to create – therefore he is both male and female. In a way he had demonstrated this through giving birth on his own to Athene. This sort of poetry now tries to break free of the limited traditional mythology. It also begins a stylistic manner, the repetitive appeal to the power of Zeus's name, the ultimate encapsulated in a monosyllable.

THE TRAGIC STAGE

Tragedians can think in any way they choose about Zeus and in any way that suits the character they have mouth the words. But one fact

is immediately striking: *Zeus never appears on the tragic stage*, just as in Homer he never appears on earth. Thus any talk of Zeus in anthropomorphic terms is in fact in some way metaphorical. And extremes can be reached:

> Zeus is the aither, Zeus the land, Zeus the heaven,
> Zeus is everything and whatever is higher than this.
>
> Aeschylus, *Heliads fr.* 70 Radt

We cannot know how these lines came to be spoken. The *Heliads*, 'Daughters of the Sun', was presumably about the grief of these sisters of Phaethon at his death following his doomed attempt to drive the Sun's chariot. But they look like a statement of pantheism (that god is everything and everything is god), something which has become possible after the Presocratic philosophers.

We know more about the characters in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* who talk about Zeus. The Chorus of old men, in their entrance piece (*parodos*), know that the power of Menelaus and Agamemnon comes from Zeus (43) and that Zeus sent them to punish Paris. But the execution of this justice will, they recognise, be grim for Greeks as well as Trojans (60–67), as is typical of the justice of Zeus. Later, as the Chorus sings of how Agamemnon had to sacrifice his own daughter so that the fleet might sail against Troy, they reach the limits of their understanding of Zeus in lines that rather defy translation:

> Zeus whoever he is, if he likes to be called this,
> this is what I address him as.
> I cannot get close to it, though I measure out everything,
> except [by calling him] Zeus, it the frustrating burden of thought
> is truly to be cast aside.
>
> *Agamemnon* 160–66

The old men think of how the myth tells that Zeus came to power through a violent succession and reach a thought that, whilst not the message of the play, is the sort of jangly semi-proverbial expression that old men might think profound:

> (Zeus) who guided mortals to think sense,
> who made *pathei mathos* a rule.
>
> *Agamemnon* 176–8

Mathos is 'learning'; *pathos* is 'experience/suffering'. *Pathei mathos* is 'learning by what happens to you'. What the old men are really wrestling with is the difficulty of understanding the mind of Zeus, i.e. of seeing the justice in what he accomplishes. But they know there is a justice to look for.

It is Zeus Xenios (of guest-friendship) that actually drives the Greeks against the Trojans in *Agamemnon* (362), and the Trojans as a result have the 'blow of Zeus' to tell of (367). Plainly they have been smitten, not by picturesque thunderbolt but by human agency operating to uphold principles, if cruelly. In this case it is the principle of guest-friendship that bonds different human societies together and is not lightly to be sundered. In the same way, the ghost of king Darius realises, in Aeschylus' *Persians*, that in their attack on Greece through their unrestrained violence [*hybris*] they created a 'crop of destruction [*ate*] from which to reap a lamentable harvest' and Zeus comes in as 'the punisher of excessively boastful conceptions' (*Persians* 821f., 827f.).

The view of Zeus in *Prometheus Bound* (whether the play is by Aeschylus or by another hand) adopts a different, Hesiodic, tone. In this wonderfully excessive play, opening in the 'uninhabited desolation' of Scythia, three gods march onto the stage – Hephaistos, Might and Violence. The latter two are the agents of the, as always, unseen Zeus, embodying aspects of the power of Zeus already in Hesiod (*Theogony* 385–8):

> also she brought forth Kratos [Might] and Bia [Violence],
> wonderful children. These have no house apart from Zeus, nor any
> dwelling nor path except that wherein God leads them, but they
> dwell always with Zeus the loud-thunderer.

Zeus's problematic justice is on display in *Prometheus Bound* but he must also have been behind the freeing of Prometheus in the lost *Prometheus Unbound*, perhaps along the lines long ago sketched by

Hesiod (*Theogony* 529–31) where Herakles shoots the bird that gnaws Prometheus' liver[71]

> not without the will of Olympian Zeus who reigns on high, that
> the glory of Herakles the Theban-born might be yet greater than
> it was previously over the plenteous earth

What predominates in the account of Zeus given by characters under the microscope of tragedy is a sense of his distance and the difficulty of understanding his world order:

> Zeus really ought, if he is (actually) in heaven,
> not make the same person (constantly) unfortunate.
>
> Euripides, *fr*. 900 Kannicht[2]

> You see him who high up here the boundless *aither*
> and the earth embraces in his moist arms
> – consider this Zeus, deem this god.
>
> Euripides, *fr*. 941 Kannicht[2]

ZEUS IN PLATO AND ARISTOTLE

Plato is indeed deeply concerned with the soul and with a world beyond this physical world of appearance and futile pleasures. His vision, however, drawing on the work done by the Presocratic philosophers, does not take named gods particularly seriously, except in order to correct the improper ideas of the poets about the behaviour of the divine. He does sometimes suggest that the gods need to be understood as ways of talking about things which are much deeper. One particularly striking instance, which has a Christian afterlife we will see in the next section, is the discussion of the meaning of the names Zeus and Kronos in his *Cratylus*. Here playful, or experimental, etymologies are used to suggest philosophic views of the divine nature:

> Some people call him *Zena*, others *Dia* [these are 'accusative' forms of the word *Zeus*] and if we put them together we reveal the nature of the god . . . for there is

> no-one who is more responsible for us and everyone else *living* [*zen*] than the leader and king of the entirety. So it turns out that this god is correctly named, *through* [*dia*] whom it is possible for all creatures to *live* [*zen*].
>
> Plato, *Cratylus* 396a–b

Plato, in his unhappiness with mythology in the *Republic*, takes particular exception to myths of Zeus, evidently because this is the nearest one can come in the traditional mythology to the sort of fundamental divine force to which Plato is actually committed. Because 'the god' is good (379b), Zeus cannot, as Achilles thought, dole out evil from the pots in heaven (379d; *Iliad* 24.527). Nor does 'the god' change his appearance, and as a result the gods do *not* travel in disguise about the world (381d; *Odyssey* 17.485). As for the notorious Ouranos, Kronos and Zeus mythology, Plato thinks it is untellable even if it does have some ulterior significance (377e–378a), and the same goes for the tales of gods fighting each other and the tale of Zeus throwing Hephaistos out of heaven (378b–e; *Iliad* 20, 1.590–94). Among myths criticised elsewhere, it is interesting that in the late and rather conventional treatise, the *Laws* (636c–d), the myth of Zeus and Ganymede is said to be made up by the Cretans to justify their perversions. This both anticipates later criticism of the myth, especially by Christians, and picks up the sort of ritual we found in Crete (p. 50).

In the *Timaeus*, where Plato talks about the construction of the Universe, he assigns the traditional gods a very small place in it. The 'Demiurge' (manufacturer god) has done his work and then Plato proceeds to the other gods. The sole mention of Zeus is: 'From Kronos and Rhea proceeded Zeus and Hera and all the ones we know are said to be their siblings, and others who are their offspring in turn' (41a). However, the language Plato uses of the Demiurge is the language that later in the Platonic tradition is applied to Zeus (Schwabl 1978: 1338). We may add that this is not surprising, given that Plato is really trying to reconceive what a Zeus should be. If Zeus was 'father of men and gods', the Demiurge is 'maker and father of this entirety' (28c), but in accordance with the doctrine of the *Republic* he is responsible only for good (30a), and therefore the question for Plato has clearly been whether the term 'Zeus' remains valuable or is simply too inaccurate. He seems to have judged the latter on this occasion.

It is consistent with this view that Plato's Zeus is generally in the mythic or conventional register. The conventionally pious man, Euthyphro, believes Zeus is 'the best and most just' and then proceeds to say how Kronos deserved to be bound and Ouranos deserved castration (*Euthyphro* 5e–6a)! The legislation that Plato envisages in the *Laws* will have its Zeus *Horios* to protect boundary stones, its Zeus Homophylos (of 'tribe-together') to protect social cohesion, its Zeus Xenios to protect strangers (all 843a). It will also have a temple of Zeus and Hera where penal taxation on those indulging in excessive dowries can be dedicated (774d). Plato could be as revolutionary as he liked in his thought, but in reality there was no real world conceivable without the apparatus of gods in general and Zeus in particular. And Aristotle is of much the same view when he opines that the whole anthropomorphic apparatus of gods is for popular consumption, for the maintenance of law and for the general good (*Metaphysics* 1074b1), or that kingship is projected onto them from present and historical experience of kingship among men and 'if men make gods resemble them in appearance, they do the same with their lifestyles' (*Politics* 1252b23–7).

SOME HELLENISTIC POETS

Zeus remained a living force in Greek literature long after the Classical Age of the fifth and fourth centuries BC. As Alexander the Great's conquests changed the world, and his successor as king in Egypt, Ptolemy I Soter, set up a great library in Alexandria – the New York of the ancient world – to collect the books that constituted Greek culture, poets who sought to define and continue that culture found their own place for Zeus. That is what I will look at briefly in this section.

We know the story of the Argonauts from Apollonius of Rhodes. His *Argonautica* is surer than Homer that Zeus plans – indeed the hero Jason is surer that Zeus intervenes in detail to ensure justice (2.1179f.), and the narrator himself supposes that Zeus takes measures following the criminal murder of her brother Apsyrtus by Medea (4.557f.). Indeed Apollonius seems to have invented (Gantz 1993: i.351) a particular reason for the torment of the prophet Phineus:

> . . . but he did not pay any attention even to Zeus himself
> revealing with precision the holy mind to men.
>
> Apollonius of Rhodes, *Argonautica* 2.180f.

The mind of Zeus is not just too difficult for mortals to understand – it is also secret (as Phineus himself now realises, 2.311–6). The knowledge of god has become a dangerous thing, as it was in the mystery religions that were now expanding and were founded on the secrecy observed by their initiates, and as it would be in Gnostic religions in the first centuries AD, where man's Fall resulted from the fatal attempt to know God prematurely.

The poet Aratus opens his poem on the constellations, the *Phaenomena*, with a mighty hymn to Zeus (1–5), playing the pantheistic themes we saw developing earlier:

> From Zeus let us begin! Him we men never leave
> unsaid. Full of Zeus are all the streets,
> all the marketplaces of men, full the sea
> and harbours. In every way we are all dependent on Zeus.
> For we are of his race too . . .

But Aratus's task is to show how the stars can guide human activity *to the extent that it is 'themis'* (religiously permissible, 18). The mind of Zeus is a great Mystery, not lightly to be revealed.

Callimachus' collection of poetic *Hymns* too opens with a hymn to Zeus. Here we have a work which characteristically of its age and environment collects local traditions particularly on the birth of Zeus: he was born in the Parrhasia region of Arcadia, he decides, not in Crete.[72] Callimachus enshrines the established culture and toys with it. But the climax comes when we turn to Zeus's relationship to royalty:

> From Zeus come kings, since there is nothing more divine than
> the lords of Zeus; so you [Zeus] selected them as your speciality.
> You gave them cities to protect while you yourself sat
> on acropolises, watching over those who govern
> the people with crooked judgments and those who do the opposite.
> [. . .]
> . . . and it is fitting to judge

> by our ruler, for he has gone far above (others):
> in the evening he fulfils that which he planned in the morning . . .
>
> Callimachus, *Hymn to Zeus* 78–82, 84–6

'Our ruler' is Ptolemy II (285–247 BC) and this is the new world of monarchs and Zeus (p. 78).

STOICS AND OTHERS: ALLEGORY AND EUHEMERISM

If Plato and Aristotle had swung away from traditional religion, it was the job of later philosophers to find a way of accommodating this central feature of Greek cultural life. Plato's successor Xenokrates (head of the Academy from 339 to 314 BC) did just this. For him (*fr*. 15 Heinze) the first principle in the universe was the monad, that single ultimate source of things; it could be viewed as male, as odd (as opposed to even), as divine; and it could be called Zeus (in the *Zena* form). This then combined with the dyad, the principle of plurality, which might be viewed as feminine, as mother of the gods and as the world soul.

It is a short step from this, then, to the Stoics. The founder of Stoicism was Zeno of Kition, whose own name is derived from Zeus. The ultimate principle for him was the fiery breath that animates everything, ourselves included, something to which one need build no temples for it is within us (*fr*. 146).[73] This fiery air was the aether and that was what Zeus really was. It was also the *logos*, the 'reason' or 'word' (as in St John's Gospel), that pervades the universe, the soul, nature, fate, god, the mind of Zeus, the necessity of the universe – interchangeably (*frs* 158, 160). This is the Nature according to which we must live. Other gods amount to other elements: Hera the air, Poseidon the sea, Hephaistos fire, and other gods to other aspects of the physical universe (*fr*. 169); Aphrodite is the binding force of parts to each other and the Dioskouroi 'correct reason and worthy dispositions' (*frs* 168, 170).

Cleanthes, his successor, carries this to an extreme, with his remarkable *Hymn to Zeus*, some of which I present below:

> Most glorious of the immortals, of many names, all-powerful forever,
> Zeus, originator of Nature, governing everything with law,
> Hail!: it is right [*themis*] for all mortals to address you,
> for from you have they gained an imitation of an echo,
> they alone of all mortal things that live and crawl upon the earth.
> Therefore shall I hymn you and forever sing your power.
> You all this world, swirling around the earth,
> obeys, wherever you lead it and willingly is ruled over by you.
> Such an assistant do you have in your invincible hands,
> the forked, fiery, ever-living lightning-bolt.
> Through its stroke all deeds of Nature are done
> and with it you steer the common reason which circulates
> through all things, mingling with great and minor lights,
> and with it you have become so much the highest king throughout.
> Nor does any deed happen on earth without you, spirit [*daimon*],
> neither across the divine vault of the ether nor on the ocean,
> except all the things that bad people do through their foolishness.
>
> Cleanthes, *Hymn to Zeus* 1–13 (*SVF* i.537, *HP* 54I)

As with Homer's Zeus, there is a categorical distinction between him and the other gods. The rest are all destructible and in the last resort only aspects of Zeus himself,[74] as are we, because we are 'of his race', as both Cleanthes and Aratus remind us. Did Aratus borrow from the Stoic, or Cleanthes from the poet? Whatever it is, there is a sense of a new enthusiasm for Zeus fuelled by a far-reaching philosophy of the universe.

Finally, the Stoic L. Annaeus Cornutus, a contemporary of Nero's, shows us how Plato's *Cratylus* had been incorporated into this way of thinking:

> Just as you are governed by your soul, so the universe has a soul which holds it together and it is called 'Zeus'. It is alive, with primacy and for ever, and is responsible for the life [*zen*] of things which live. For this reason Zeus is said to be king over the universe, just as the soul in us and our nature might be said to be king over us. We call it Zeus [*Dia*] because *through* [*dia*] it everything comes into existence and is preserved.
>
> Cornutus, *Compendium of Greek Theology* 2

With this depth of allegory, the story of the stone that Kronos was given instead of Zeus assumes new significance: it was the earth itself formed as the foundation of an infant universe (*ibid.* 6). However, Cornutus finds it necessary to account for a great deal of the known cult of Zeus, which is still very much alive. We are told why he is called 'father of gods and men', 'cloud gatherer', 'deeply thundering', why he holds the aegis (because of the rushing storms):

> and they call him *soter* [saviour] and *herkeios* and 'of the city' and 'paternal' and 'of common kin' and *xenios* and *ktesios* and 'of counsel' and 'trophy-holder' and 'of freedom' – he has infinitely many names of this type because he extends to every capability and condition and is the cause of, and overseer of, everything. This is why he is also called father of Justice [*Dike*] . . . and of the Graces . . . and of the Seasons [*Horai*].
>
> Cornutus, *Compendium of Greek Theology* 9

The sceptre in his hand is not just a symbol of royal power but also of stability and support; the thunderbolt in his right hand needs no explanation; 'often he is depicted holding a Nike' because he cannot be defeated. The eagle is his bird because it is the fastest bird. And so it goes on, overwhelming in its devotion despite the intellectual detachment of the philosophy.

A generation later, around AD 101, the great orator Dio Chrysostom, only a year or two after returning from exile to his home city of Prusa in northeast Turkey, delivered his *Borysthenitic Oration* and, reaching the climax, told (36.39–61) of the creation of the universe itself in a myth he imaginatively claimed had been created by the Magi of Persia, though it looks rather Platonic and Stoic to anyone else's eyes. The universe is a chariot powered by four horses, of which the highest and outermost is sacred to Zeus himself. Sun, moon and stars are a mere part of its fiery brilliance. It is of course the ether. Next come the horses of Hera (air), Poseidon (water) and Hestia (an unusual choice for earth). But the horse is only an image for the soul of the charioteer 'or rather the thinking and ruling part' of that soul. This *nous*, the most intellectual and divine part of the soul, had at the beginning of time in a lightning flash been the demiurge (creator) of the universe that now exists. A fiery air resulted and in union with Hera, in this most complete

sexual act, he released the entire seed of the universe. 'This is the blessed marriage of Hera and Zeus that the children of the wise sing in secret rites.' And when the demiurge looked at his act of creation he did not simply rejoice, no,

> seated on Olympus, his dear heart laughed
> from joy to see the gods

'all of them now born and present'. Thus Dio deflects that much criticised passage of Homer (p. 89 above) into a mystic, philosopher's reading of the beginnings of the universe. And though he expresses it with his own flair, this is not really original, but something that any educated person of AD 101 would recognise and applaud. Only children or the uneducated would by now take Zeus literally.

Other awkward moments in Homer led to no less inspired solutions. One was where Zeus had challenged the other gods (*Iliad* 8.18–22):

> Come, try, you gods and all you goddesses:
> hang a golden chain from heaven
> and hold on to it, you gods and all you goddesses
> – you won't drag down from heaven to the ground
> Zeus highest counsellor, not even if you labour very hard . . .

Aristotle took this unseemly tug of war and used it as an image for the nature of motion (*On the movement of animals* 699b37). Motion is relative to something fixed and unmoving and this applies to the Universe, which moves under the influence of the unmoved mover – a single, focal god, by implication Zeus in an Aristotelian Homer. What Aristotle was using as a casual illustration was used more determinedly in later mystic tradition, and by the time of the last Neoplatonists, such as Proclus,[75] there is a doctrine that the ultimate divine force driving the universe, the One, is tied or connected to all the forms of being beneath it through a *seira* ('chain', the word Homer uses), or rather a series of chains. Though lower forms of being may display a baffling multiplicity, what makes them intelligible and valuable is their link to the divine. This idea has a continuing popularity today as the 'Golden

Chain', or the 'Great Chain of Being'. Just remember: Zeus is at the other end!

Rationalisation is a different approach, designed to reduce myth to straightforward actual events, and one to which Greek culture was indeed susceptible. We ourselves know that myth is one thing and history quite another. But for Greeks, who had no history before the fifth century BC except by word of mouth, myth occupied the space that older history does for us. Thus the division between history and myth was not real versus mythical, but reliable modern versus more fanciful old. They had no trouble for instance in thinking of Herakles as a real person of long ago. How far could this go? It is one thing, as Hecataeus did in his *Genealogiai* (1F27), to say that Herakles did not bring Eurystheus a dog from Hades (Cerberus) but a snake from Taenarum that was so poisonous it was called 'the dog of Hades'. But would anyone claim that Zeus actually once walked the earth? This was the problem in classical times, that rationalisation would deal with things that were unrealistic in myths of heroes, but gods were gods and therefore what was unacceptable in their behaviour could only be dealt with by allegory. Nevertheless, this final frontier was crossed by Euhemeros of Messene.

Euhemeros lived in the wake of the conquests of Alexander and was a friend of Cassander, King of Macedonia (317–298 BC). The conquests of Alexander closed the gap between men and gods and sometimes led to gods being assimilated to him. Dionysos was often supposed to have conquered the world and reached India as Alexander had, but Euhemeros took a new and trenchant line in his *Sacred Record* (*Hiera Anagraphe*). In this work he told of his travel to a mythic land, Panchaia, one of a group of islands many days' sail across the Ocean south of Arabia:

> Here he saw the inhabitants, the Panchaioi, who were of exceptional piety and worshipped the gods with utterly magnificent sacrifices and remarkable gold and silver offerings. The island was sacred to the gods . . . and there was in it on a high hill, at its peak, a temple of Zeus Triphylios, founded by Zeus himself at the time when he was king of the whole world, when he was still amongst men. In this shrine there was a gold pillar on which, in Panchaian letters, there was written down a summary of the achievements of Ouranos and Kronos and Zeus . . . before

> Zeus, succeeding Kronos as king, married Hera and Demeter and Themis. From them he had the following children: the Kouretes from the first, Persephone from the second, and Athene from the third.
>
> Euhemeros *FGrH* 63F2 (as reported by Diodoros)

Characteristically of an age in which royalty and ruler cult was taking off, Euhemeros was asking what difference there was between a king and a god if both were distinguished for their acts as Benefactor (Euergetes) and Saviour (Soter) of mankind because of their Kind disposition (Eumenes). As rulers became remote, gods came closer.

This fantasy is evidence for a weakening commitment to the gods and their worship. Euhemeros himself was later reviled as an *atheos*, a 'godless' person, not quite an atheist in our sense. For all we know he could have believed in a more abstract divinity as much as Plato or Epicurus. He did, however, by taking this final step, make 'universal history' (a total history, from the beginning) more possible than it had been. Thus the first major universal history had been that of Ephoros in the 340s/330s BC. He had begun with 'the return of the Herakleidai', after the Trojan War, on the grounds that verifiable history started there. What might seem to us like good method is of course really a gap waiting to be plugged. Euhemeros had provided the toolset and Dionysios Skytobrachion (probably second century BC) deployed it vigorously to deal with the *Campaigns of Dionysos and Athene*, the Amazons, the Argonauts and the Trojan War. Now Diodoros of Sicily could take a quantum leap forward and deal with the gods themselves in his universal history, the *Historical Library*. For the following information on Zeus, we are indebted to the inhabitants of Atlantis (a source of Skytobrachion's that doesn't command confidence):

> The son of Kronos, Zeus, followed the opposite style of life to his father and showed himself reasonable and kindly [*philanthropos*] to everyone to the extent that the masses called him 'father' [*Zeus father, then*]. Accounts of how he took over the kingdom vary – either on the willing abdication of his father or because the masses chose him out of hatred for his father. Kronos launched a campaign against him with the help of the Titans but Zeus won in the battle and, on becoming Lord of all lands, he visited the whole world, doing good to (*euergetein*) the race of men . . .
>
> Diodoros, 3.61.4

And they call him *Zen* (a variant form of 'Zeus') because he caused men to *live* (*zen*) well.

Along with this rationalisation goes a process of dividing gods and heroes up into several with the same name. This is designed to eliminate inconsistencies of parentage or of chronology in universal history. There are, it turns out, three Zeuses:

> Those who are called 'theologians' count three Zeuses. Zeus 1 and 2 were born in Arcadia. The father of Zeus 1 was Aether and they say Persephone and Dionysus are his children. The father of Zeus 2 is Ouranos (Heaven), who is said to have given birth to Athene, whom they say was the leader in, and inventor of, war. Zeus 3 was a Cretan, the son of Kronos, and his tomb is on display on that island.
>
> Cicero, *On the Nature of the Gods* 3.53 (but with Greek god names)

The tomb of Zeus on Crete ceases to be a curiosity, and becomes the proof of Euhemerism.

It can be seen that Euhemeros had a lasting impact. This included an impact on an emerging nation, the Romans. Arguably their most important early writer, certainly the most versatile, was Ennius (239–169 BC). In his lost Latin piece, the *Euhemeros*, he 'translated and followed' the *Sacred Record* and brought this work thereby to the attention of Romans, such as Cicero (*Nature of the Gods*, 1.119) and Pliny the Elder who tells us that the Babylonian god Zeus Belos was the founder of astrology (*Natural History* 6.121). But it is perhaps more important in the long run that Christian authors writing in Latin took up this approach with enthusiasm.

Lactantius (*c.* AD 240–*c.* 320) apparently succeeded in finding a text of Ennius's *Euhemerus* and quotes the following from it:

> When Jupiter had travelled round the earth five times and had distributed empires to his friends and relations, and made laws for men and done a lot of other good things, having now acquired undying fame such that he would be remembered for ever, he passed from life in Crete and departed to the gods. His tomb is in Crete, in the town of Gnossus, and on it is written in Greek letters ZAN KPONOY, i.e. in Latin 'Jupiter son of Saturn'.
>
> Ennius, *Euhemerus* (Euhemeros *FGrH* 63F24)

These Euhemerist views were part of the Christian toolset, particularly in north Africa, practised by authors such as Tertullian, Minucius Felix, and Lactantius' teacher Arnobius. Augustine would use it in his *City of God* (7.18 and 7.27) and from these authors it passed into the medieval tradition (see 'Zeus afterwards' below).

SYNCRETISM

Greeks had always had to deal with the question of who the gods of foreigners ('barbarians') actually were. So, Herodotus in describing the gods of the Scythians says without thinking it at all problematic that 'Zeus in Scythian is quite rightly in my opinion called Papaios' (4.59). It is a natural assumption that as all Greeks worshipped Zeus, then all foreigners did as well: Homer's readers doubtless shuddered when Polyphemos tells Odysseus, 'We Cyclopes aren't bothered about Zeus the aegis-bearer' (*Odyssey* 9.275). No nation is really this barbaric. So it is that as the world with which Greeks are acquainted grows larger and as Greek culture spreads ever wider, we discover quite a number of Zeuses who express local divinities in the common (Greek) language. Identification of gods with each other is known as *syncretism*. This became crucial as the Greek world was extended under Alexander the Great. A need had in effect arisen for a common religious currency which could ease the free trade of religious ideas.

This trend is boosted by the activities of Alexander himself. The scene is the oracular shrine at the oasis of Siwah northwest of Egypt. This belonged to Ammon, long brought into the Greek system as Zeus Ammon. Here Alexander is pronounced in Egyptian fashion to be the son of the god, and inheritor, therefore, of the position of the pharaohs. Ammon is, however, an alien Zeus, at whom Lucian pokes fun in the second century AD (*Council of the gods* 10), and which Lucan comments on in the first century:

> Jupiter, so they say, but not brandishing thunderbolts
> and not similar to ours, but with twisted horns, Hammon.
>
> Lucan, *Civil War* 9.513f.

Principal gods, whatever their attributes, have a tendency to become the local Zeus. In what is now northwest Turkey, then Phrygia and the surrounding lands, a local god of importance, Sabazios, is usually made a Zeus (rather than a Dionysos). His cult embraced snake-handling, gained some favour under Attalos III of Pergamon (in 135/4) and later became a focus for associations of individuals. These were called Sabaziasts and enjoyed the riddling depictions of toads, turtles, lizards and frogs crawling over sculpted hands.

Down in Syria a range of divinities popped in and out of identification with Zeus. Each one is a 'lord' (*baal*). So the lord of what in Greek is Mt Kasios, but Saphon in Syrian, is Zeus Kasios or Baal Saphon. This is the mountain where Zeus had his battle with Typhon. Here, in the Hellenistic world the traditions which had first given rise to the Zeus-Typhon myth were rediscovered and what might have seemed like an identification of convenience between one god of the weather and another on a Syrian mountain genuinely reflected a real constituent of Zeus's identity. Another, a major storm and rain god, Adad in Babylon and Assyria, but Hadad in Syria and Phoenicia, was presented in Greek as Zeus Adados.[76] Another version of this god was the sun god at Heliopolis (Baalbek in the Lebanon) and visitors today may still marvel at the remains of the huge and glorious temple to Jupiter of Heliopolis, or Adad, built by emperors from Antoninus Pius (AD 138–61) to Caracalla (AD 211–17) and destroyed by Theodosius in 379. Its striking cult statue, wearing a robe strangely decorated front and back with busts (for instance of Sun and Moon), however, escaped destruction and could still be seen in the 560s. Inscriptions to Jupiter Heliopolitanus are found as far afield as Hadrian's Wall. This was a great oracular shrine consulted even by Trajan. Thus we see a movement in theology towards a great syncretistic god, embracing Zeus, local gods and the Sun, both in the Zeus of Heliopolis and in Zeus Sarapis. The Syrian Zeus-Adad, of which another instance is to be found at Hierapolis (Bambyce) and whose cult is described by Lucian in his *On the Syrian Goddess*, was sometimes worshipped as a bull, like the Canaanite god of *Exodus* 32 worshipped as a golden *bull-calf*. This also takes us back to the formative stages of Greek myth, if we think of the story of Zeus who in bull form snatched Europa from Tyre.

In the same part of the world, Jews were usually bitterly opposed to syncretism, as we can see from Elijah's supposition that 'Baal' is a different god, that of the Canaanites, who must be shown up as powerless to deliver fire or rain (*1 Kings* 18). It was therefore a deliberate provocation by the Seleucid king Antiochus IV Epiphanes, in the course of a bloody repression, to dedicate the Temple on the Mount at Jerusalem to Zeus Olympios and another on Mt Gerizim to Zeus Xenios (*2 Maccabees* 6.2). This was in the context of the revolt of the Maccabees in 168/7 BC against modernising, or rather hellenising, forces. It is possible that Antiochus actually had a policy to draw up a consistent pattern of worship of Zeus in his kingdom, tied to the cult of the ruler (Préaux 1978: ii.577). But Jerusalem was clearly a step too far.

A different merger took place in Egypt, embracing the strong native religious tradition. Independently of Greek culture, the sacred bull Apis appears to have been identified with the god of the dead and in particular of the dead pharaoh, Osiris, resulting in the powerful god Sarapis (or in Latin, Serapis). But under Ptolemy I, Greek religious experts identified him in turn with the Greek god of the dead Pluto, whose iconography was adopted. This powerful god, based in the Memphis Serapeum with its monk-like *katochoi*, was identified with various Greek gods but above all, because of his authority and his association with rulers (the Ptolemies in this case), with Zeus. Once again a single god becomes a special focus for veneration and for understanding the world order, and inscriptions of the Roman Empire, particularly from the second century on (Vidman 1969: 343), will honour 'Zeus Sun Great Serapis' or proclaim that there is *One* Zeus Serapis.

GREEK THOUGHT ABOUT ROMAN JUPITER

Jupiter is a special case of syncretism: he is, and becomes, the Roman equivalent of Zeus. As we have seen (p. 9) the words Zeus *pater* ('father') and Jupiter are in origin the same words as each other, deriving from the common Indo-European culture of their linguistic ancestors. Much will obviously have changed in the 3,000 years since

then. However, as Romans and Italians came into contact with Greeks settled all around Italy (for instance at Naples, *Neapolis*, 'New City') and as they entered the stage as a world power, Roman enthusiasm for Greek literature and culture at all levels of society drew the Roman Jupiter back towards Zeus, just as in Greece the poets once had to some extent reunited the different Zeuses of different Greeks.

It is beyond my scope to start anew at this point on Jupiter and Roman culture. But I do want to show how thought about Jupiter continues in the West the story of Zeus.

Ennius, effectively the father of Latin literature, had a character in his tragedy, *Thyestes*, speak up in grandiose philosophic mode:

> *aspice hoc sublime candens, quem invocant omnes Iovem*
> Just look at this shining on high, whom all invoke as Jove.
>
> Ennius, *fr*. 153 Jocelyn, in Cicero, *Nature of the Gods* 2.4

This is Zeus the awesome ether, faithfully transposed from Euripides (p. 95 above).

More striking still are the lines of Valerius of Sora (tribune in 82 BC), where thought going back to the earliest Orphic poetry finds new, and startling, expression in the hands of this 'most literary of all those who wear the toga' (Cicero, *de oratore* 3.43):

> *Iuppiter omnipotens regum rerumque deumque*
> *progenitor genetrixque deum deus unus et omnes!*
> Jupiter all-powerful over kings and the world and the gods,
> begetter and mother of gods, one god and all gods!
>
> Valerius Soranus, in Augustine, *City of God* 7.10

These splendid lines were quoted by the polymath Varro (116–27 BC) in a dialogue *On the Cult of the Gods*. Varro himself was a key figure in the development of views about the gods at Rome with his encyclopedic masterpiece, the *Human and Divine Antiquities* in 41 books, dedicated to Julius Caesar (the chief priest) in 47 BC. Resting on Greek views and terminology, he divided discourse about the gods ('theologia') into three types:

1. *mythicon*, concerning myth, which is the discourse of poets;
2. *physicon*, concerning nature and science, which is the discourse of philosophers;
3. *civile* (i.e. *politicon*), pertaining to the state, which is the language of nations and their political leaders.

This presents a number of problems for the religious person: even Varro admitted that in myth (1) 'there are many things made up contrary to the dignity and nature of the immortals'. As for civic religion (3), statues cannot possibly correspond to the reality of the divine nature and neither can gods that have resulted from assigning divine status to great men of the past, as Euhemeros alleged for gods of cult (see below). Thus the only reality for educated men such as Cicero and Varro is (2), the philosophical.[77]

What, then, for Varro is the real nature of Jupiter? So far as we can tell, he took on board the views of Greek thinkers like the Stoic philosopher Poseidonios. Jupiter is 'the mind of this world who fills that whole mass which is constructed from the four elements and moves it' or perhaps he is the aether/heaven that embraces the air/earth (Juno) that lies below. His thought is reflected in Augustine's dismissive comments:

> Let Jupiter at once be all the gods and goddesses, or, as some wish, let them all be parts of him, or, as it appears to those who have decided he is the mind of the world – a view shared by many great teachers, let them be his virtues.
>
> Augustine, *City of God* 4.11

Augustine mentions a line of Vergil's in this context:

> . . . for god pervades everything
> – lands, stretches of sea, and the deep heaven.
>
> Vergil, *Georgics* 4.221f.

This is an important point, because it makes clear that Vergil – the same man who talked about souls being purged till they consisted only of 'aetherial perception and the fire of unadulterated air' (*Aeneid* 6.746f.) – was engaged knowingly in an exercise in mythical theology

in his *Aeneid* in the 20s BC. His Jupiter is no simple storybook god (any more than Homer's had been), but belongs with a view of the universe, how it works and what man's place is in a divine context and in the quest for the virtuous life.

At the same time, the story is built on the Greek mythology of the Trojan War and its aftermath. It draws heavily on Greek poets, in particular Homer, whose *Iliad* and *Odyssey* lie behind so many of the scenes and even phrases in the book, and behind the whole fabric of anthropomorphic gods interacting with the story of men on earth. Jupiter commands the gods, determines the course of events, can be appealed to by other gods, but, true to Zeus, never himself intervenes directly. He speaks, *fatur*, and his word is 'that which has been said', *fatum*, the Latin for 'fate'. The distance from Homer, if we understand him properly, is less than one might imagine. This can be seen in *Aeneid* 1:

> Smiling at her [Venus] the begetter of men and of gods
> with the expression with which he makes calm the sky and the storms
> kissed the lips of his daughter and then spoke [*fatur*] as follows:
> 'Do not fear, Cytherean [Venus], they stand unshifted, your people's
> fates: you will see the city and the promised walls
> of Lavinium, and you will carry high [*sublimem*] to the stars of heaven
> great-hearted Aeneas; nor has my decision changed . . .'
>
> Vergil, *Aeneid* 1.254–60

In the poetic mythology, a god smilingly kisses his beloved daughter and gives her reassurance. But this is a civic god with power over the sky and the storm, to whom nations may pray. More philosophically, as in Valerius of Sora, he is the begetter of all – and we may, as people of the first century BC, take the view that Homer had understood this in his formula *father of gods and men*. Continuing in philosophic mode, we know that Jupiter is responsible for, maybe even is, a whole fiery element of the universe, most purely displayed in the aether which the poet here calls *caelum* ('sky'). It is this sky, with its blazing stars, high up, the *sublime candens* of Ennius, to which the soul of Aeneas will fly after death. He will be taken up amongst the gods, and perhaps in the Stoic sense he will join the divine fire, which is God

and Zeus. The universe is not random, there is something wise that plans, and it determines fate. In the poetic discourse these are the words of Jupiter, but really this is the divine mind that infuses the whole world and universe in which we live. It is within this tradition that we can understand the oracle from the shrine of Zeus Ammon in the Libyan desert, as imagined by Lucan (AD 39–65) and admired by Dante (*Epistle* 10 §22)

> There is no seat of (the) god but earth and ocean and air
> and heaven and virtue. Why should we seek further for the gods above?
> Jupiter is whatever you see and whatever you are moved by.
>
> Lucan, *Pharsalia* 9.578–80

It would be wrong, however, before closing, to overlook the relationship between Jupiter and the emperor. There is a strong sense already in the *Aeneid* that Jupiter reflects the beneficent control of the Roman world by Augustus. Indeed the whole of the Roman emperor cult started from the declaration that on his death Julius Caesar had become a god, Jupiter Julius, whose Flamen Dialis – as the time-hallowed priest of Jupiter was called – would be Mark Antony. Jupiter would be the chosen image of the emperor Septimius Severus too (AD 193–211), whilst others preferred to be Mars or Hercules.

OVERVIEW

From the beginning, then, the superficialities of epic poetry cloak a hidden depth of reflection on the nature of the divine, and the mysteries of that understanding are progressively teased out by later thinkers. He is the controller of an often grim world order. Presocratic thinkers then liberated Zeus from his mythic dress and saw in him the first principle of the universe, perhaps even fire. The impious battle of the gods in Homer had only been an allegory for these scientific or philosophic truths. It is against these backgrounds that tragedy is written, where characters struggle to find meaning in acute crises and grope for the mystery of Zeus. Plato and Aristotle have no time for the mythic Zeus, but are deeply influenced by the evolving philosophic

Figure 12 The emperor Augustus depicted as the Zeus of Pheidias. 1.85 m tall. Early first century AD.

Zeus. Hellenistic poets we look at continue the sense of Zeus in epic or drama, but also worry about the limits on our knowledge and the dangers of exceeding them. Like any other writers they are part of their age and the hymn that opens Aratus's *Phaenomena* is very like the great hymn of Cleanthes the Stoic. Stoics were more comfortable with accommodating Zeus into their theology and deployed allegory freely. But a new solution emerged with Euhemeros: the mythological gods were in origin great men, like the great Hellenistic kings. This was later a godsend for the Christians, who could now, with the authority of Greek thinkers, undermine the basis of Greek worship. Finally, we looked at the thought underlying the encounter of Zeus with non-Greek cultures. Typically the gods might be identified or merged – this was syncretism. But in the Roman case we can see how an understanding of the less mythic and more philosophic approach to Zeus, as canonised in Varro's tripartite theology, helps us with Roman views of Jupiter. It was the Roman Jupiter, after all, that would pass on the tradition of Zeus into the culture of Europe, as we shall next see.

ZEUS AFTERWARDS

6
PHASES OF HISTORY

When dealing with a long stretch of time such as the millennium and a half since the end of the classical world, it is convenient to divide that time into different periods. However, periods do not begin and end cleanly and such breaks obscure continuities. The Roman Empire came to an end. But when? Conventionally, the sack of Rome by Alaric and the Visigoths in 410 marks the spot. But pagan writing about the universe and rather metaphorical gods continued unabated throughout fifth-century north Africa, and the apparatus of the western Roman state continued in one way or another, however limited, till the Lombards invaded Italy in 567.

If the 'Dark Ages' followed the end of the Roman Empire, that is to emphasise rather emotively the end of a particular urban economy and a particular European union. Yet exaggeration is all too easy in what in fact are the Early Middle Ages. The Christian Church becomes the bearer of culture and cities do not cease to exist or people to think about the world around them. Even if Christianity prescribed a good deal of the thought-world, this can be viewed as a shift in language: it was usually possible to take a view of the pagan gods other than instant dismissal. Indeed, as pagan gods had ceased to be serious competition, writers might, if they chose, bring them within their philosophy or astrology.

'Renaissance', too, is a dangerous term. It denotes 'rebirth', of something which has been dead or dormant, namely in this case 'civilisation', which had perished with the Roman Empire; the fall of Constantinople to the Turks in 1453 could, on this view, trigger an

outflow of intellectuals who came bearing classical civilisation to a West grateful to receive it. This is not wholly without truth and it is certainly the case that in art it became possible to depict pagan gods where Virgin, Child and Saints had predominated for many years and to reintroduce a more natural and realistic art on the basis of rediscovered ancient works. But it does misrepresent the vibrancy of ideas in the written culture of the Middle Ages, however much ideas tended to be couched within a traditional framework of education and of Christianity. And it seriously misrepresents the exciting climate of ideas in the 1200s and 1300s, vital centuries without which there would have been no 'Renaissance', no matter how many Constantinoples fell.

I will be concerned with these periods and some of their legacy in the modern world in this section. But as I cannot tell every story, I have chosen to focus on the culture of Western Europe (the context in which this book itself has arisen). I can only mention in passing that there is another story to be told about the Greek east and about Arabic receptions and developments of Greek philosophy.

CHRISTIANITY TERMINATES ZEUS?

Early Christians had spared no pains to overturn devotion to Zeus, the chief pagan god. With the adoption by Constantine of Christianity in 312, the road now lay open for the end of paganism. But it was not a simple matter, as repeated decrees show. One from Constantine II and Constans in 346 instructed that temples everywhere should be closed and sacrifices stopped (*Codex Theodosianus* 16.10.4.). In 353 night sacrifices are banned again after being allowed by Magnentius (16.10.5). In 356 sacrifice and idolatry are banned (16.10.6). A further seven decrees of Theodosius in 391/2 repeat the banning of every form of pagan worship in every possible place – temple, shrine, in the home and on the land.

However, what really told against paganism in this climate was not worthy decrees of pious emperors, but money. Zosimus (*New History* 4.59) reports a discussion Theodosius is said to have had with the Senators at Rome around 393, in which he turns from exhortation to

hard economic fact: it cost too much to keep up the pagan sacrifices (*so they were being kept up*) and the money was needed for the defence budget. Paganism had always been expensive and the number of ruined temples attested to that. So it was for Zeus: the last Olympic Games, which needed ample funding, were held in 393. The temple burnt down in 426 and there would be no money for repair. Instead, a rudimentary Christian church was built where Pheidias' workshop had been. Earthquakes, particularly in 522 and 551, finished it off.

The statues have their own story as they continued to be revered in a sort of museum culture; the temples tended to be protected too. But they were no longer sacrosanct. Constantine, constructing the effectively new city of Constantinople, needed to import culture and tradition; so for instance he sacrilegiously took the Zeus from Dodona and the Athene from Lindos and put them in the new Senate House. Rather later, Pheidias' legendary statue of Zeus from Olympia became the star piece in the major collection of Lausus, who was the Grand Chamberlain of Theodosius II (402–50). This collection, which also included for instance the Aphrodite of Knidos, was entirely destroyed in a fire of 475.[1]

This was, however, not quite the end. If Zeus was not worshipped under his own name, then people did not cease to need the services he had provided for millennia. On the mountain tops, where once Zeus had been worshipped, such as Mt Olympus and Mt Lykaion, a particular saint often received worship instead. This is the prophet Elias, sometimes St Elias, known in English as Elijah, who in a grand confrontation with the prophets of Baal called forth from the very summit of Mt Carmel a mighty rainstorm to flood the drought-ridden land, who smote the men of Ahab with lightning from a hill top, and who, when he died, rose to heaven in a 'fiery chariot'.[2] These are the qualities our Zeus replacement needs and they led to strange new mythologies in popular Greek culture: thunder is the prophet Elias driving across the sky, perhaps in pursuit of a dragon. Oddly, Mt Carmel itself, which is 'between Judaea and Syria', was the location of an oracle which was consulted by Vespasian in AD 69 as a step towards becoming emperor (Tacitus, *Histories* 2.78). This shows how underlying religious phenomena are not so much displaced as contested for by different religions: the religion of the Canaanites is really being

mapped onto the monotheism of the Jews through the figure of Elijah; the mountain top weather god Zeus of the ancient Greeks is then translated into a Christian scriptural language as the prophet Elijah.

JUPITER IN WESTERN EUROPE 500–1200

At the summit of the citadel there was a temple of Jupiter and (Juno) Moneta.

Wonders of the City of Rome, §24 (*c.* AD 1150, describing the Capitol Hill)

Classical texts in Latin continued to be read in the West after the end of the Roman world. As literacy became possible only in monastic and church contexts, the acceptability of classical literature to Christians was a key question. Undoubtedly the derivation of medieval education from pagan classical systems helped preserve a respect for the texts. The pagan texts also benefited from the support of leading churchmen and from the practice of copying manuscripts in monasteries, without which little would have survived, given that most of our manuscripts date from the ninth century or later. In addition, the view that Charlemagne and his advisors took of the culture a new Roman emperor should promote led to what is now called 'the Carolingian Renaissance' and the promotion of literary activity beyond that required by the Church. Thus the ancient gods retained a presence and were from time to time discussed.

At the same time there was sufficient interest in classical mythology for books in which it played a large part to survive and be read. Central to this tradition were three learned works of the fifth century AD – the *Commentarii* ('Notebooks') on Cicero's *Dream of Scipio* by Macrobius (prefect of Italy in 430), Martianus Capella's *Wedding of Philology and Mercury* (perhaps around 450) and Fulgentius' *Mythologiae* (perhaps in the generation following Martianus). It would be beyond the scope of this book to go into detail, but suffice it to say that these works kept the pagan gods alive in a literary way and suggested they had a greater significance than as objects of idolatry and sacrifice. Jupiter represented maybe fire, maybe life, maybe the soul of the world.[3] This Neoplatonism, the last and most otherworldly stage in

the development of Plato's philosophy in the ancient world, is in effect the opposite of Euhemerism and, reaching for ultimate truths about man and the divine, does not obviously contradict Christianity in the way that pagan cult practices did.

Jupiter for Macrobius is the sky (i.e. ether) and his sister-wife Juno, the air: 'sister because air is born of the same seed as the sky, wife because air is subject to the sky' (*Dream of Scipio* 1.17.15). Martianus raises the stakes. Personified Arithmetic speaks to us in Book 7 of the eternity of the monad, that unitary number without which other, plural things cannot come into existence and which subsists even when they are gone:

> This father of all things is rightly called Jove, because it bears witness to the causative power of that prototypical and intelligible form. And after its example we speak of one god, one world, one sun, a single moon, and also the four single elements that exist . . . Some have called this Harmony, some Piety or Friendship, because it is so bound together that it cannot be cut up into parts; however it is more correctly called Jupiter, because the same is the source and the father of the gods.
>
> Martianus Capella, *Wedding of Philology and Mercury* 7.731

It is revealing that the material of which this is part is repeated in Isidore of Seville's *Book of Numbers* 'except for material relating to the pagan gods'.[4] This highlights the pagan tensions inherent in the scientific and educational material which the Middle Ages inherited and valued. On the other hand the sense of an individual god to be worshipped among others is very weak in these last pagan texts, and in Martianus they are harmless allegories – these authors have fulfilled the tendency already present in Plato to view the objects of the mind as the true target of religion, rather than sacrifice to gods in temples, now in any case closed. Neither Macrobius in his *Dream of Scipio* nor Martianus, however, speaks a word about the Christian God, Christ or Moses. Religion has become sublimated for the intellectual classes of late antique Roman Africa.

Fulgentius' driving concern, particularly in the *Mythologiae*, is to find the philosophic sense in a large range of myths of gods and heroes. This is his Jove and Juno as two of the four elements:

> - first, Jove as fire: this is why he is called Zeus in Greek – Zeus in Greek can mean either life [*zen*] or heat [*zein* – to seethe, boil], either because they mean that all animate things have vital fire, as Heraclitus holds, or because this element is hot;
> - second, Juno as air, which is why she is called Era in Greek; and although they ought to have made air masculine, nevertheless she is the sister of Jove for this reason, that these two elements are very much associated with each other, so she is the wife of Jove too, because air, when it is wedded with fire, blazes.
>
> Fulgentius, *Mythologiae* 1.3 (bullet points added for clarity)

This is a text of sustained popularity up to the Renaissance and it filled the gap of 'science' without alleging false gods, providing another instalment for the virtual encyclopedia that has dominated the imagination of so many teachers and writers over these centuries. The world could be known if there were enough comprehensive works and certainly Isidore's *Origines* (or *Etymologiae*) covered every imaginable aspect of culture and learning. Isidore (*c*. 570–636) was Bishop of Seville in a Visigothic renaissance in Spain and his *Origines* spread like wildfire across Europe. From our point of view he is interesting for maintaining and propagating the Euhemerist way of looking at ancient gods. This had once, as we have seen, been argued in order to decry the gods but later it seems to have given them a reason to survive in Christian culture (Seznec 1953: ch.1.). Isidore's account of the 'Gods of the Pagans' begins like this:

> (1) Those whom pagans declare to be gods are revealed once to have been men, and, in line with each one's life and achievements, they began to be worshipped after their death amongst their own people – like Isis among the Egyptians, Jupiter amongst the Cretans . . . (9) amongst the Greeks Cecrops . . . was the first to call upon Jupiter, discover statues, set up altars, sacrifice victims, when that sort of thing was unheard of in Greece. . . . (34) Jove is named after *helping* [*juvando*] and Jupiter is the sort of *helping father* [*juvans pater*], i.e. there for everyone. They also gave him the personal title of Jove *Optimus* [*best*], despite the fact that he committed incest with his family and sexual outrages on others. (35) They sometimes depict him as a bull because of the abduction of Europa – he was in a ship whose sign was a bull; sometimes he is supposed to have sought congress

> with Danae through golden rain – so you can understand that the virtue of a woman has been corrupted by gold; sometimes in the form of an eagle because he snatched a boy to abuse him.
>
> Isidore, *Origines* 8.11

A final strand to consider here is that of astrology, which, even if it got short shrift from Isidore (3.27) as mere superstition, continued to fascinate in an age whose notion of science was very different from ours. It had in any case been integrated by the end of antiquity into the whole system of knowledge. Astronomy, from which it was barely distinguishable, was part of the advanced core curriculum, the *quadrivium*. Jupiter (Zeus) was more than a label for a planet, he *was* that planet, something which fits on the one hand with the non-Euhemerist strand of thinking, which itself tended to meditate on sun, stars and universe.[5] On the other it connects with the euergetist (benefactor/do-gooder) character of Euhemeros' Zeus: the planet Jupiter is predominantly beneficent and health-bringing.[6] This mythic-astrological lore was so well embedded that it was impossible to remove the pagan names from the planets and constellations and William of Conches, the tutor of Henry Plantagenet around 1122, even justified knowledge of pagan myth on this basis: if we did not know the story of Jupiter taking on bull form to abduct Europa, we would not know how to find Taurus in the skies (Seznec 1953: 51). Astrology became specially influential from the twelfth on to the fourteenth, through interaction with Byzantium and with the Arab world that had taken such an interest in Greek philosophy and science.

1200s, 1300s: RENAISSANCE BEFORE THE RENAISSANCE

Knowledge of the Classics was pretty commonplace among the literate and their audiences by the end of the Middle Ages. One of the most delightful pieces of evidence is the collection of songs in a manuscript of 1230 or earlier from Benediktbeuern in the foothills of the Alps, the so-called *Carmina Burana*. Celebrated in the remarkable rhythmic work of Carl Orff in 1938, these medieval poems have a place for Jupiter

in their lightly worn classical mythology: laughing (*risu Jovis*, 'with the laughter of Jove'), sometimes ruling, once the planet. The Archpoet tells us that 'men may look at appearances, but the heart is open to Jove', which seems rather Christian (191, stanza 22): *homo videt faciem, sed cor patet Jovi*. He makes a good rhyme too, as when the singer indignantly denies he has been unfaithful:

Unde juro Musas novem,	So I swear by Muses nine,
quod et maius est, per Jovem,	and, more than that, by Jove,
qui pro Dane sumpsit auri,	who for Danae took the form of gold,
in Europa formam tauri.	and in the case of Europa the form of a bull.

Carmina Burana 117, stanza 4

A lot of the knowledge of mythology was coming from Ovid's *Metamorphoses,* which was by now interpreted in ingenious allegorical ways. A key work in this tradition was the *Book of Albricus the Philosopher on the Images of the Gods*, which some thought, probably rightly, was by Alexander Neckham (1157–1217). Also spelt Alexander *Nequam* (Latin for 'the Wicked'!), this was a philosopher and encyclopedist whose mother suckled Richard Lionheart and who was the first man in history to mention the glass mirror and the magnetic compass. Under the pen name Albricus, then, he told what gods looked like, important in an age when all the statues had gone, and he told what their stories meant.

This was in turn an important source for the truly massive rhyming poem, the *Ovide moralisé* of around 1300, which brought these materials to a wider market than even a Latin work could:[7]

Of Jupiter and his shape:

Jupiter, son of Saturn, to whom the sky and its rule was assigned by lot, should be painted seated in great majesty on a throne of ivory, holding in his right hand the royal sceptre and in his left the thunder. He casts down some giants that he has defeated and prostrated beneath his feet. Beside him stands an eagle, wings extended, who between his feet is seizing a young boy named Ganymedes.

Ovide moralisé: 'Texte du commentaire de Copenhague',
de Boer v.394, from 'Albricus'

At the heart of this project is the idea that if 'our blessed Saviour and Redeemer Jesus' used parables and comparisons, then it was legitimate so to use Ovid. It follows, however, that we are not extracting a single definitive meaning from Ovid but in a way using him as a text which can be turned to good effect in a sort of moral preaching and accordingly a variety of different interpretations is suggested for each myth, for instance that of Ganymede:

- Explanation 1: Jupiter was a king of Crete (10.3368) who defeated the Phrygians in battle and took Troy. Ganymede was very pretty and Jupiter took him away for his own pleasure *contre droit et contre nature* (3385).
- Explanation 2: *Jupiter est un element | sor touz est assis le plus hault* (3401–2): 'Jupiter is an element, above all he is seated the highest'. He is the hottest and driest and he is refreshed by the heavenly water-carrier Aquarius, figured in this myth as Ganymede.
- Explanation 3: Jupiter, now the creator god, for love of mankind – *pour amour d'umaine nature* (3411) – is prepared to descend from heaven and become that which he has never been, a man. Like an eagle he flies off to the skies, carrying the flesh that he has taken on. For Jupiter, it seems, is Christ.

In the Danae myth Jupiter is 'God our help, our father, our saviour, our king, our creator'. Danae is the virginity loved of God (4.5584), and the tower in which she is enclosed is the womb that God enters with golden rain, not violating the door, as he joins himself to our nature. The offspring is the *Aurigena* (born of gold, Ovid *Metamorphoses* 5.250), the valiant Perseus, and in fact *c'est Jhesu, vrai dieu et vrai home* ('It is Jesus, true god, true man,' 5610). It recalls the Annunciation (5611–3), that scene where the angel of God appears to Mary to announce that she will bear the Son of God. This is a favourite of European painting and the viewer of Danae amidst her golden rain should always bear in mind that what artists are painting is a secularised Annunciation; it is more than an opportunity to paint an impassioned nude.

Not everything runs so smooth in this inventive reading of classical myth. Io, long virtuous and loved by God, turns to carnal pleasure

– wine, food and sex (1.3956) and Argus is this world (3938). She is a pagan image of what Mary of Egypt meant to the Christian (4013).[8] Semele, by contrast, is a drunkard led astray by an even drunker old woman, Juno (3.872), unless she is the soul 'drunk and full of the divine love' (907), with a heavy stress on her motherhood of Bacchus.

To our taste this may be obsessed with Christian religion and overwhelms the carefree pagan sense of the text. But there is a pleasure of the crossword puzzle about working out these ingenious interpretations, a music in the jaunty rhymes and a fine demonstration of the never-ending power of classical mythology to make you think.

As might be expected, Italian authors were intensely familiar with secular Latin literature by 1300. Maundy Thursday 1300 is when the *Divine Comedy* of Dante is set (it was written 1306–21). This is a poem immersed in the Classics, famously citing with approval (*Inferno* 4.88–90) the work of Homer, Horace, Ovid and Lucan in that order – and Vergil is of course Dante's guide to the Underworld. Jove exists in the background, occasionally emerging thundering at the Giants he once defeated, or as the planet Jupiter, to which his name had been applied by misguided pagans. But even the *Ovide moralisé* doesn't quite prepare us for this theology:

o sommo Giove,	O supreme Jove,
Che fosti in terra per noi crocifisso.	who was crucified on earth for us.

Purgatorio 6.118f.

Nothing is without precedent: this equation of Zeus with Christ had also been made before by one John the Deacon, drawing the logical conclusions from Plato's *Cratylus* (see p. 95f):

> And Zeus son of Kronos, father of gods and men, is to be understood as the only-begotten son of God: as he is responsible for life [*zoe*] he is called 'Zeus'. But as he is the son of God, he is called 'son of Kronos', because we should think of Kronos as that pure mind [*koros nous*][9] which we can neither see nor grasp, which had no origin . . . but Kronides, the son of this one, consubstantial and sharing his throne, and seated above those gods who are as a conceit called his sons, judging all humanity and for this reason called father of men and gods.

The poet and polymath Petrarch (1304–74) had the right books in his personal collection: the *Mythologiae* of Fulgentius and Alexander Neckham's *Albricus on the Images of the Gods*. Among much else he wrote in Latin hexameters an *Africa* on the second Punic War, so aware of the classical range of gods that we could be back in the world of Vergil:

> Jupiter in front of the others, proud on his august throne
> Holding sceptre and thunderbolt in his hands; and Jove's armour-bearer
> [the eagle] in front
> In his claws raised the Idaean youth [Ganymede] above the stars.
>
> Petrarch, *Africa* 140–42 (in Seznec 1953: 173)

And his friend Boccaccio (1313–75) wrote the new Fulgentius, a *Genealogie deorum gentilium* ('Genealogies of the Pagan Gods', 1st edn 1360, later revised), which was vastly popular in the succeeding centuries. His account has its oddities, like the primal being 'Demogorgon', which he has got out of a suspiciously unknown author 'Theodontius' whom he cites everywhere.[10] But it settles down to the elegant enumeration of divine beings from the beginning and shows all the influences we have talked about. There are several Jupiters, as there have to be when you start from a Euhemerist basis. Jupiter 1 (*Geneal.* 2.2) is the son of Ether and Day, as Theodontius assures us. This Jupiter under the name of Lysanias introduced civilisation and pagan religion at Athens, according to the Greek Leontius (who?). And because he was an ingenious, sparky type of person they made out he was the element of fire and the son of the Ether. Boccaccio thinks he came to be called Jupiter because he was like the planet Jupiter, in its astrological character as described by Albumasar (ninth-century Arab astronomer), 'hot, humid, airy, temperate, modest and decent' and so on. Jupiter 2 is the son of Caelum ('Heaven', Ouranos) and Jupiter 3 a Cretan, the son of Saturn (Kronos). 'Some serious people think that he is called Jupiter because he is the *helping father* [see Isidore above, p. 122], but that only fits God himself.' In Greek he is pronounced *Zefs*, Boccaccio tells us, i.e. 'life' (*zen*, 'to live', see Fulgentius or Plato) but of course it is Christ who is the way, the truth and the life 'and that is how it really is'. Rationalisations and allegories

appear from time to time. Jupiter is supposed to have snatched Europa in the form of a white bull, because that was the emblem painted on his ship (see Isidore above). If Jupiter kills Semele in the form of a thunderbolt, this means that 'fire i.e. Jupiter does not mix with air i.e. Juno except when as a thunderbolt it descends to the world below' (2.64).

Classical learning about Jupiter included England. To cite but one example, Chaucer, another reader of the *Ovide moralisé*, envisaged himself carried off by the eagle of Jupiter to the 'House of Fame' in the poem of that name (around 1380).[11] This motif of 'dreaming poet swept up by eagle of Jove' comes from Dante (*Purgatorio* 9.22–4) but the poem is in its own right an exhibition piece of classical learning, extending to the *Somnium Scipionis* and a summary of the *Aeneid*, including the scene from *Aeneid* 1 that we discussed earlier (p. 111):

> Ther saugh I Joves Venus kysse,
> And graunted of the tempest lysse [relief].
>
> Chaucer, *House of Fame* 219f.

John Gower in his *Confessio Amantis* (*c.*1390) knew his Ovid too. For instance Jupiter at 5.6249 deflowers Callisto, and earlier Io:

> Ovide telleth in his sawes,
> How Jupiter be olde dawes
> Lay be a Mayde, which Yo
> Was cleped, wherof that Juno
> His wif was wroth, and the goddesse
> Of Yo torneth the liknesse
> Into a cow, to gon theroute
> The large fieldes al aboute.
>
> John Gower, *Confessio Amantis* 4.3317–24

ZEUS AND THE RENAISSANCE

With the Renaissance, humanist thinkers were now consistently looking for philosophies and values beyond those the Church had supplied.[12] This was a time when the Neoplatonic philosophy which

had dominated the end of pagan antiquity took on a new lease of life, though in such a way that it was not demonstrably, dangerously, inconsistent with Christian belief. However, this did not particularly benefit Jupiter, as Plato had always been more abstract in his treatment of divinity. Thus a neoplatonist like Marsilio Ficino (1433–99) or a humanist like Pico della Mirandola (1463–94) would talk more about mystic aspects of religion than about Jove, even if Marsilio (*Letter* 8) was comfortable with Jupiter as aether and Juno as air. At best this is a world of emblems, where Federigo da Montefeltro could commission a medal with the planetary sign of Jupiter governing the discordant signs of Mars and Venus, war and love, whilst his eagle carries their insignia – including, for Jupiter Tonans (thundering), a cannonball (Wind 1967: 95f., fig. 71)! With a similar if more literal mindset, Conrad Celtes, a German humanist, in a 1507 woodcut constructed a picture of Christian shape but pagan content (fig. 13; Wind 1967: 252f.): here Jupiter and Phoebus Apollo look like God the Father and God the Son, surrounded by Minerva and Mercury playing Mary and St John Baptist, and with the Dove (Holy Spirit) represented by Pegasus – both flew after all!

The now uninhibited return to the treasury of Greek and Roman civilisation above all gave new life to the mythology, which on the one hand was an engaging set of motifs, situations and passions, and on the other mysteriously suggested some deeper sense underlying these apparently trivial stories. It was exploited notably in art and music.

Classical mythological themes, like any others, had to be commissioned, and they do not start appearing till the 1400s. There is for instance in the antechapel of the Palazzo Publico at Siena a series of frescoes depicting classical gods (together with Roman republican heroes) painted by Taddeo di Bartolo around 1414, including a 'Jupiter with Lightning Bolts'. An anonymous 'Scenes from a Legend', attributed to the Master of the Griggs Crucifixion, depicts, among others, Callisto and must date to around 1430. Meanwhile, in the unlikely setting of the bronze doors of St Peter's, in the Vatican, Antonio Averlino (or 'Filarete') included in 1445 a depiction of the 'Rape of Ganymede', which clearly must have been allegorically meant, figuring as it did opposite the crucifixion of St Peter. He also did an Amalthea here, the goat that suckled Zeus.

Figure 13 Centre of a woodcut from a book on music of 1507 – a Christianised set of pagan gods.

Art existed in a sense ready-made in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (p. 48), often described as the 'painter's bible'. It certainly underlay a great quantity of the depictions in art, particularly the *amours* of the gods and lent its wit to many of those representations. Already in the 1470s editions were being printed at Subiaco (near Rome), Venice, Milan and Leuven. But it is from 1500 that this market gets going. Guidoccio Cozzarelli took a break from mainly religious paintings to do a 'Callisto' presumably around 1500. The first Danae in her shower of gold seems to be that of Baldassare Peruzzi in a fresco of the Villa Farnese in Rome (1512), painted appropriately for the banker Chigi; there is also a Ganymede there. Giorgione (*c.* 1477–1510) did a Daphne, Europa and Ganymede. Correggio (*c.* 1490–1534) did Danae (unless it was Giorgione), Ganymede, Io and the infancy of Zeus. Titian (*c.* 1488–1576) did Antiope, Callisto, Daphne, Ganymede. Giulio Romano (1499?–1546) did practically every myth – including Europa, Ganymede and Semele. He depicted Jupiter's childhood, *amours* and offspring in a series of 12 paintings around 1533, of which six survive, four of them at Hampton Court Palace and one in the National Gallery (both

Figure 14 Giulio Romano, *The Infant Zeus Guarded by the Corybants on Crete*, mid 1530s.

London). And there is also an overwhelming *trompe l'oeil* 'Fall of the Giants' (1534) as they are cast from Olympus, or rather from a cupola, all over the Giants' Room of the Palazzo del Tè at Mantua. Here Sistine Chapel meets pagan myth. I reproduce, however, as figure 14, the joyful but glowering scene of the infancy of the thunder god himself from the National Gallery (London).

The visit of Jupiter and Mercury to Baucis and Philemon is a more sensitive and advanced subject, maybe. At any rate, apart from a painting (oddly) of Bramantino's *c.* 1500, it first emerges with Primaticcio's designs for Fontainebleau (see below) around 1550, and after that is welcome when it is attempted for the humble, often rather dark, but mysterious peasant environment in which the gods find themselves. There is a marvellous Rembrandt of *Philemon and Baucis visited by Mercury and Jupiter* (1658) in the National Gallery of Art, Washington, which you can find on the Web. I cannot on the other hand quite imagine what it would look like as a 'marionette opera', which is what Franz Joseph Haydn created, to the pleasure, apparently, of the empress Maria Theresa at Esterházy in 1773. But if a New England company could do *Tosca* that way,[13] then perhaps Baucis and Philemon would have worked fine.

The visit to Lycaon and his transformation into a wolf are surprisingly rare. There seems once to have been a painting of Raphael's. There is a Rubens oil-painting sketch (1636–8) for a fresco intended for a palace of Philip IV of Spain with a rather Christ-like Jupiter. After that there are some engravings, directly illustrating Ovid.[14] Perhaps kings and princes on the whole did not like tales of the punishment of kings.

The flavour of Jupiter's *amours* is summed up by Thomas Heywood's 1625 compilation of scenes from his plays as *The Escapes of Jupiter*. On the other hand Congreve's libretto of 1707, whose performance with music by John Eccles fell through, was taken up and modified by Handel for his own *Semele* (1744), a grandiose oratorio with flaming altars and dragons, but too sexy a plot for the tastes of his supporters. Coincidentally in Paris in 1709 another *Semele* was performed, by Marin Marais, the leading composer of the Versailles court. It probably represented a step up from the routinely diverting god-and-beloved stuff done by the court lutenist Louis de Mollier for performance by

the comedians of the Marais in *Les amours de Jupiter et Sémélé* (1666) to a libretto of Claude Boyer. This was fashionable entertainment for the educated classes, complete with machines to wheel in scenery and fly in gods. Anyone who wants to catch the mood of Paris in those days, with premieres of Molière and Corneille, need only consult the lists of performances in those years that are now available on the Web.[15] Greco-Roman mythology was a sort of cultural uniform which made audiences comfortable about their elite status without unduly taxing them.

These myths were typically treated very lightly, setting an amusing counterpoint of triviality against the labour of having learnt Latin and read Ovid in education. There is a *Calisto*, for instance, of 1651 by Cavalli in which Jupiter, in his quest for Callisto, starts by regretting giving human beings free will. He then adopts a *falsetto* voice and dresses up as a goddess in order to convince Callisto he is Diana, which, incredibly, succeeds instantly. This is a superbly preposterous opera, whose one mystic moment is the transposition of Callisto into the stars as the Great Bear.

Of all the material we have discussed in the first part, it might seem that Pausanias's account of the *Daedala* at Plataia (p. 31f) was singularly unlikely to generate an opera. But it did produce a ballet *Platée ou Junon jalouse* ('Plataea, or Jealous Juno') by Jacques Autreau, which was made into a comic opera by Rameau in 1745 for the delectation of Louis XV and his son the future Louis XVI, complete with a tenor (m.) singing the part of Plataea (f.). This opera was revived by New York City Opera in 2000 and 'set in a seedy modern bar patronized by a colourful group of 20th century caricatures, including a black sailor, a masculine lesbian, a gaudy showgirl, a veiled baroness, and a bribe-taking cop'.[16] What settings of Pausanias does the twenty-first century hold in store for us?

There is, however, another dimension to this use of myths of Jupiter. Since the beginning Zeus had had a special connection with kings and repeatedly in more modern times we discover kings portrayed as Jupiter. Poets referred to Henri II of France (ruled 1547–59) and his court as *le nouvel Olympe* and this image was cultivated by the court itself acting out these roles. One has only to look at the frescoes in the palace at Fontainebleau to see this swirling world of gods, heroes and

neoplatonic vision, for instance the 'Eagle abducting Ganymede' of 1551–6, designed by Primaticcio, who had worked under Giulio Romano, and executed by Niccolò dell' Abate. To take another example Rubens interlaced Henri IV and Marie de' Medici with Jupiter and Juno, even identifying them, in a cycle of 1622–5, which is mainly now in the Louvre. This usage both explains the popularity of Jupiter myths in court productions and makes some myths, like that of Semele, rather problematic. Was Handel in his *Semele* criticising the influence of Madame de Walmoden, the mistress of George II?

TWILIGHT OF THE GODS

In most histories of European civilisation, the French Revolution and the period of romanticism mark a turning point. From our point of view, however, they only prepare the ground for the modern period which has gradually turned its back on Renaissance values and asserted with new confidence a belief in progress, setting new value on the contemporary in comparison with the past.

In the nineteenth century, classical education continued to be central. The first Gilbert and Sullivan operetta was *Thespis*, in which Jupiter descends to earth to find out why the gods are no longer respected. But its first performance in 1871 was not exactly a success: it was booed not only by the audience but also by the orchestra! Despite 64 performances, it no longer survives. At the other end of a career, Richard Strauss's *The Love of Danae* of 1940 was his penultimate opera. Hofmannsthal's libretto brings together so much of the mythology of Zeus's *amours*. Danae, Semele, Leda, Europa, Alkmene – they are all there, in a work where Strauss is thought to have identified himself in a way with the god Jupiter, inconsistently raising his tone somewhere near to the Wotan of Wagner in his *Ring*.

Zeus-Jupiter is not mentioned in the *Ring of the Nibelungs* (first performed complete 1876). But he haunts it. Wagner's great cycle of operas is exceptional in posing large questions about the order of the world and putting in front of us the problems of being a flawed chief god, rather than just finding humour in a divine apparatus. The Wotan of Wagner implies the Zeus of Homer and the Jupiter of Vergil in the

background, and the conflict with Giants recalls the establishment of Zeus's rule. But, truer maybe to Norse mythology's Ragnarök (which he understood as 'Twilight of the Gods'),[17] or to the final cataclysm of the Stoics in which the current universe will one day disappear, the portrait of Zeus is enhanced by a sense of the ending of the world and the ending of the rule of the gods. For the Greeks Zeus would rule forever. But modern times are less prone to images of stability.

Nowadays, as we browse the Web, the name 'Zeus' is often only a powerful monosyllable denoting total control, popular among those who give names to products. 'Zeus Technology is the world's expert on web server infrastructure.' 'Zeus Informatics was founded in 1998.' 'Zeus is a totally new concept in generating web traffic.' 'The Zeus for Windows programmers text editor has been specifically designed for software developers working in the Windows . . . environments. It offers a host of features that make the task of writing code easier and more productive.' And *Zeus Electronique Développement* deals with 'the study and manufacture of industrial electronic products.' More academically:

> We are a collaboration of about 450 physicists who are running a large particle detector at the electron-proton collider HERA at the DESY laboratory in Hamburg. The ZEUS detector is a sophisticated tool for studying the particle reactions provided by the high-energetic beams of the HERA accelerator.[18]

The Greco-Roman world has also become the stuff of fantasy, and every classicist first meets the classical world through the mythology. The film *Clash of the Titans* (1981), with its Norse Kraken-monster, clockwork owl, Ray Harryhausen's astounding special effects for 1981 and a hotchpotch of Perseus mythology, rolled in front of us a Zeus still controlling the world, whose human traits were not so very distant from the original Greek conceptions. It shows that we still respond, as the Greeks did, to a sense of irony and weakness in the running of the universe that is not really compatible with modern faiths. Zeus is an interesting casting problem too. Laurence Olivier was an epic choice for *Clash of the Titans*. This too is a world where Kevin Sorbo as Hercules (*Hercules: the Legendary Journeys*, television 1994–9) brings the lone gunslinger to the Greek world and occasionally

communes with his irascible father, Zeus, played by another substantial figure, Anthony Quinn.

No fantasy is complete without a computer game. One such is *Zeus: Master of Olympus* in which you may compulsively 'build a city, challenge the gods, spawn a myth'.[19] I'm not sure, however, whether you will be able to put whatever you have gained from this book to much effect.

Finally, your direct line to Zeus. Who knows who was running the latter-day US oracle site *Ask Zeus!* or why? But its benefits were clear:

> Have a question? Don't trust earthly wisdom. Mortals make mistakes. Get your answers from the King of the Gods Himself. Omnipotence is cool![20]

Be warned, it suffered from the modern delusion that you should risk answers that aren't just yes/no and didn't recommend sacrifice to this or that god half often enough. On the other hand, authentically like Delphi, it backed the wrong side in politics. And it seems to have passed away, like the ancient god himself, as I add the last full stop.

NOTES

WHY ZEUS?

1 Rays of light (*Iliad* 13.837), fluttering snow (*Iliad* 19.357), see Schwabl 1978: 1014. Cretans even called day 'Zeus'.
2 As explained by Nilsson 1967: i.6.
3 I am also aware of J. Scheid and J. Svenbro, *The Craft of Zeus: myths of weaving and fabric* (Cambridge, MA 1996); the title is eye-catching but the book is not about Zeus.
4 'Any study which attempted to define the Greek gods independently from one another, as if they were separate and isolated figures, would be in danger of missing an essential point about them', Vernant 1982: 99.

KEY THEMES

1 As noted by West (1997: 115 and 1978: 366–8, 384), who thinks the *aigi-* in question may once have been a type of bird like the Himmelszeige ('heaven-goat') in rural German lore, a bird similar to the one Lithuanians believed accompanied the god of lightning, Perkunas. His Near-Eastern parallels, however, suggest that the word means 'riding the storms'.
2 Ramskin issues: Nilsson 1967: 110–13, 396 f.
3 E. Kunze, 'Zeusbilder in Olympia', *Antike und Abendland* 2 (1946) 91–113, section 2.
4 K. Brodersen, *Die sieben Weltwunder* (Munich, 1996) 63.
5 Strabo 6.3.1; Pliny, *Natural History* 34.40; Livy 27.16.8.
6 Tn 316, Hiller 1978: 1002; another tablet of this antiquity was found at Chania in Crete in the early 1990s (E. Voutiras in LIMC 8.1, p. 310) naming Zeus and Dionysos.

7 Possible according to Hiller 1978: 1002.

8 It is *Dios* 'of Zeus' plus a second element *nysos*, which is the problem. It would be easier if it belonged to a related language rather than Greek itself. P. Kretschmer proposed that it was Thracian (which rests on a misunderstanding of mythology), *Einleitung in die Geschichte der griechischen Sprache* (Göttingen, 1896) 241f. O. Szemerényi, *JHS* 94 (1974) 145 suggests transposition of the consonants in Indo-European **sunus* 'son'. This is questioned by West (1978: 373f.), who suggests he is a sort of male nymph.

9 Other parallels to the Dioskouroi, see P. Kretschmer, *Glotta* 14 (1925) 303 (Schwabl 1978: 1011).

10 Schwabl 1978: 1013, citing P.Mel. *fr.adesp*. 20f (938) P.

11 Schwabl 1978: 1233, on the basis of S. Eitrem s.v. 'Hera' in *RE* 8 (1913) 369–403, deduces a list such as Kithairon, Euboia, Attica, Argos, Hermione, Stymphalos, Kyme, Samos, Knossos. The Euboean instances are: (1) on Mt Ocha, rising high above Karystos at the south of the island; (2) on Elymion (Kerényi 1976: 140), an island of uncertain location (which is surprising given that it is supposed to have had a city on it) where there was a *nymphikon* (marriage grotto?).

12 Renewal: Dowden 1989: 201f.; 2000: 195f., 280–90. *Daidala*: Pausanias 9.2–3; Kerényi 1976 : 142; de Polignac 43. Mt Kithairon: Plutarch *fr*. 157 Sandbach ch.3. *Teleios*: cf. Pausanias 9.2.7, 8.22.2; marriage as a *telos*, fulfilment, Kerényi 1976: 104.

13 Plutarch *fr*. 153 Sandbach, Pausanias 9.3.

14 Deubner 1932: 117, 176–8; Kerényi 1976: 104–8; Schwabl 1978: 1074.

15 Pausanias 8.10.1, 8.36.2f.; Dowden 1992: 121f.

16 The evidence for this is admittedly very patchy in the archaic period (Gantz 1993: 42).

17 B. Rutkowski, *The Psychro Cave and other Sacred Grottoes in Crete* (Warsaw, 1996) 19. *Tikto*: Agathokles *FGrH* 472F1b (perhaps third century BC). Psychro and position of Dikte: West 1966 on line 477. Dikte in the east: Strabo 10.4.12. See also L.V. Watrous, *The Cave Sanctuary of Zeus at Psychro* (Liège, 1996) 18f.

18 Goat: myth later rationalised the goat into a nymph (Bremmer in *OCD*[3] s.v. Amaltheia), not vice versa, though perhaps the goat did not originally have a name (von Gärtner, in *KlP* s.v.). Praisos: Agathokles *FGrH* 472F1a; Schwabl 1978: 1208f. Blood and bees: Antoninus Liberalis 19; Schwabl 1978: 1209; Nilsson 1950: 542f. Annual rebirth: Nilsson 1967: i.321. Hymn: Nilsson 1950: 546f; Harrison 1912: ch.1, who should be read with some caution; Willetts 1962: ch.7.

19 West 1966 on line 477.

20 Vergil, *Aeneid* 10.567; M.L. West, *JHS* 122 (2002) 111.

21 On this type of myth, see also West 1997: 85–7, and J. Fontenrose, *Python: a study of Delphic myth and its origins* (Berkeley, 1959), and esp. 129f.

22 First, in Akousilaos *FGrH* 2F8 (early fifth century BC), unless these are the words of Philodemos (first century BC).

23 An ancient footnote ('scholion') on Pindar, and Apollodoros (1.6.1f.)

24 Similar lines in Hesiod, *Catalogue of Women fr*. 31 West-Merkelbach, the tradition from which Homer borrowed them.

25 The 12 Olympian gods are Zeus and Hera, Poseidon, Demeter, Athene, Apollo and Artemis, Aphrodite, Ares, Hermes, Hephaistos and Dionysos or Hestia.

26 Hesiod, *Theogony* 886–900, 924–6.

27 The reason is probably, as West says (1966: 212f.), that the worship of Aphrodite Ourania was used by someone to make her the daughter of Ouranos.

28 N.R.E. Fisher, *Social Values in Classical Athens* (London, 1976) 8, 10.

29 The possibly sixth century BC epic poem the *Cypria* (*fr*.7) makes her a child of Nemesis, on whose worship see above. Theseus is the Paris of the story that brings her to Rhamnous and the origins of all this variant mythology can be seen to be in cult.

30 There are depictions too of her being cast to sea in a chest with her infant son Perseus, but they do not involve Zeus.

31 Homer *Iliad* 5.266, 20.232; *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* 202.

32 Dowden 1992: 112–4, Strabo 10.4.21. A variant version of the myth in which Tantalos abducts Ganymede and takes him hunting (see Gantz 1993: 536) fits quite well with the Cretan ritual model.

33 Also at *Iliad* 12.26f.; *Odyssey* 14.457f. He 'rainstorms' at Hesiod, *Works and Days* 415, lightens at *Theogony* 690, and thunders at *Iliad* 8.133. See West 1978 on line 416 and Cook 1925: ii.1–4.

34 2.146, 13.837.

35 Other passages to look at: *Iliad* 2.412, 5.91, 11.493, 12.275 and 279–86,15.192, 19.357–8; *Odyssey* 9.111, 11.405 (= 14.303).

36 Survivals: Schwabl 1978: 1017, citing B. Schmidt, *Das Volksleben der Neugriechen* (Leipzig, 1871) whose information on Zeus is, as Schwabl notes, largely taken over by the standard English-language book, J.C. Lawson, *Modern Greek Folklore and Ancient Greek Religion* (Cambridge, 1910); Cook 1925: ii.3. Rainwater: known from Athenian inscriptions such as *IG* I^3 84.34f. (418–417 BC); Orphics: Clement, *Stromata* 5.49.

37 *Iliad* 2.412, 4.166; *Odyssey* 15.523.

38 See pp. 11–13 above. This view is stated still more explicitly by Dio

Chrysostom: 'many barbarians, through poverty and lack of skill, call mountains and unworked trees and unshaped stones gods' (*Oration* 12.61 of c. AD 100).

39 Plutarch, *fr*. 191 Sandbach; Augustine *de Genesi ad litt. imperf.* 1.14 cited by Cook 1914: i.103n.2.

40 The word for 'clear weather' is *aithre* – but there were those who could not resist saying *aither* instead.

41 Cook 1914: i.103; E.Meyer in *KlP* s.v.Olympus (1).

42 I thank Dr Ken Wardle for this information.

43 *SIG*^{3} 1107 of 200 BC, Nilsson 1906: 4; Nilsson 1967: i.394 n.2; Parker 1996: 32; Schwabl 1978: 1046, 1134.

44 These lines struck a chord. Archilochos paraphrases them at *fr*. 131 (with 132) West, as no less than six ancient authors noted; and they provided a model for Stoics discussing the influence of the divine surrounding atmosphere, the 'environment', on man – see R. Polito, in T. Wiedemann and K. Dowden, *Sleep* (Bari, 2003) 57f.

45 There is a whole discussion around this passage, see for example E.R. Dodds *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley, 1951) ch.1 and Lloyd-Jones 1971: 22–5. Solon *fr*. 13.75 West talks about Zeus sending *ate*, which results from excess wealth.

46 Selloi: Parke 1967: 21. Mycenaean huts: Schwabl 1978: 1114.

47 Schwabl 1978: 1020; there is, oddly, a good example at Aristophanes, *Birds* 1743–54.

48 *Bretas*: Euripides, *Heraclidae* 936f., *Phoenissae* 1250f., 1472f. Dedicated place: Vitruivus 2.8.15.

49 'Philios . . . because he brings all men together and wants them to be friends with each other', Dio Chrysostom 12.76; Jost 1985: 275.

50 Ps.-Demosthenes 43.14, 82; Parker 1996: 105f.

51 Strabo 8.7.4. From *hom-/ham-* 'together' and *ararisko* 'link up'. Later, this Zeus became *Homagyrios* ('of the Assembling together'), as the original sense of *Amarios* faded.

52 The Lykaia are briefly handled by Nilsson 1906: 8–10. The temple of Zeus Lykaios on Mt Lykaion received only a little worship by Strabo's time (8.8.2). For all other information in this paragraph see Jost 1985: 184, 267f., 295.

53 On these Boeotian cults see Schachter 1994: iii.105–8. Cult association: Pausanias 9.34.6, Strabo 9.2.29. Cult at Halos: Herodotus 7.197. Migration: Schachter's view that the title Laphystios travelled northwards is not in my opinion necessary. Naming: Strabo 9.2.29. Cheiron: see also Dowden 1989: 91.

54 In his abridged edition (London, 1922) ch.xxvi.

55 *Iliad* 2.196; Hesiod, *Theogony* 82.
56 This is based on the incisive account of Lloyd-Jones 1971: 6f. and *passim*.
57 West 1978 on lines 249ff., West 1997: 123ff.
58 This was a familiar type of thought in the Near East too: West 1997: 126f. Homer is sometimes viewed as borrowing from Hesiod, e.g. *Iliad* 18.39–48 borrowed from *Theogony* 240–62, according to M.L. West, 'The date of the *Iliad*', *MH* 52 (1995): 203–19 at 208.
59 See M. Oppermann in *OCD*[3] s.v. Macedonia, cults.
60 Julian, letter to Arsakios archpriest of Galatia (22 Loeb, 84 Budé) 431a–b; fragmentary letter, possibly to Theodoros the archpriest, (vol. ii p.304 Loeb, no. 89a Budé) 291b–c.
61 Cf. Stengel 1920: 16. Pausanias 4.17.4, 10.27.2 (where *eschara* and *bomos* are used interchangeably).
62 Ktesios: Nilsson 1967: i.405. The village was Phlya or Myrrhinous, Pausanias 1.31.4; Piraeus: Farnell 1896: i.55. Zeus Herkeios also at Olympia and Argos, see Farnell 1896: i.54.
63 See also *Odyssey* 7.164 and 13.51.
64 Aeschylus, *Suppliant Women* 27f. See also Euripides, *Ion* 1032f.; Stengel 1920: 104; Farnell 1896: i.61 (and the evidence at 164–6). Third libation: Sophocles, *fr*. 425 Radt; Aeschylus, *fr*. 55 Radt; Hesychius, s.v. *tritos krater*; Athenaeus, *Deipnosophists* 692e–693c.
65 Information on Greek names is best taken from P.M. Fraser and E. Matthews (eds), *A Lexicon of Greek Personal Names*, vol. ii, M.J. Osborne and S.G. Byrne (eds), 'Attica' (Oxford, 1994).
66 Tertullian, *On Idolatry* §22f.; E. Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* bk 1 ch.15 (London, 1910) 447 n.1.
67 Lloyd-Jones 1971: 5: '*Moira*, one's "portion", is in the last resort identical with the will of Zeus'.
68 This sort of thinking is characterised by Lloyd-Jones 1971: 36.
69 For the *aither*, see G.S. Kirk, J.E. Raven, M. Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, 2nd edn (Cambridge, 1983) 198: 'The pure cosmic fire was probably identified by Heraclitus with' *aither*. See also Lloyd-Jones 1971: 83.
70 See also West 1983: 89.
71 Lloyd-Jones (1971: 97–103) brilliantly speculates that the third play of the trilogy was the *Women of Etna* and that the outcome was Zeus sending Dike (Justice) amongst men. The problem, however, remains why Prometheus was released and it is difficult not to make the release the subject of the final play.
72 This was a deliberate and wicked choice, based on Arcadian traditions mentioned by Pausanias 8.8, 8.36: the Cretan version had captured the

market – one only has to look at Aratus, *Phaenomena* 31–5 (of course, 'if this is true', 30).

73 All references are to *SVF*, vol. i.

74 The view of Chrysippus and Cleanthes according to Plutarch, *de communibus notitiis* 1066a (*SVF* ii, Cleanthes *fr.* 536).

75 Cf. *Elements of Theology* 21; *Platonic Theology* 1.3;

76 Philo of Byblos, in his *Phoinikika*, drawing on genuine Near-Eastern material, also talks about Zeus Adados and about Astarte (Aphrodite), *FGrH* 790F2 10.31.

77 Varro's dialogue was one of the 76 books described as *Logistorici*, also called, after a leading character in it, the *Curio*. We learn about the *Antiquities* from Augustine's *City of God*, e.g. 6.5, 4.11. Statues and Euhemerism: Cicero, *de natura deorum* 2.62, 1.77ff.; Augustine, *City of God* 4.27.

ZEUS AFTERWARDS

1 The key piece on this collection is Cyril Mango, Michael Vickers, and E.D. Francis, 'The Palace of Lausus at Constantinople and Its Collection of Ancient Statues', *Journal of the History of Collections* 4.1 (1992) 89–98. On these statue movements, see also J. Elsner, *Imperial Rome and Christian Triumph* (Oxford, 1998) esp. 189–91.

2 *1 Kings* 18, 2 *Kings* 1–2 and Mendelssohn's oratorio, *Elijah*.

3 This is already in Varro (Augustine, *City of God* 7.9).

4 Translated from J. Willis, *Martianus Capella* (Leipzig, 1983) 262.

5 As in Alexander Neckham (died 1217 – he is buried in Worcester Cathedral), *de rerum naturis* 1.7 ('on the seven gifts and the seven planets').

6 E.g., Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos* 1.5; Macrobius, *Dream of Scipio* 1.19.19; Martianus 9.885, 'The planet Jupiter, health-giving for everything seeing that he is ruler of the (gods) above . . .'.

7 The five-volume edition, very short on prefatory material, by C. de Boer (Amsterdam 1915) argues to my mind quite implausibly (i.9–11) for a date in the 1320s. The 1290s seem just as viable. In Appendix II (v.387–429) he presents the 'Texte du commentaire de Copenhague', but it reads (v.389) extraordinarily like the author's preface. 'Alexander' is named with Fulgentius and Servius as a source (also v.389). This work was brought to the wider attention of scholars around 1340 through the *Ovidius moralizatus* of Peter Berchorius (Pierre Bersuire).

8 For Mary of Egypt see, e.g. http://www.ocf.org/OrthodoxPage/reading/st.mary.html. She was a prostitute from the age of about 12 to 30.

9 By now, Plato's account of *koros* had been accepted and from Proclus on it was used as a technical word for 'pure', cf. Liddell-Scott-Jones, *Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford, 1940), s.v. *Koros* (B) Adj.
10 On Theodontius, there is a piece by M. Pade, 'The Fragments of Theodontius in Boccaccio's *Genealogie Deorum Gentilium Libri*', in M. Pade, H. Ragn Jensen and L. Waage Petersen (eds), *Avignon & Naples: Italy in France – France in Italy in the Fourteenth Century* (Rome, 1997).
11 There are signs too that in this work, Chaucer was drawing on the *Ovide moralisé*: S. Delany, 'Chaucer's *House of Fame* and the *Ovide Moralisé*', *Comparative Literature* 20 (1968) 254–64.
12 In this section above all, I have gratefully made heavy use of Reid 1993.
13 http://www.marionettes.com/tosca.shtml.
14 One can find images of engravings by Agostino Musi (Agostino Veneziano) *c*. 1523, and by F. Foppens, 1677.
15 http://foires.net/cal/cal.shtml.
16 http://www.frenchculture.org/music/events/rameau-platee.html.
17 *Götterdämmerung*, but actually it means 'Destiny of the powers'.
18 Information from: http://www.zeus.com, http://www.zeusinformatics.gr/index_eng.html, http://www.cyber-robotics.com, http://www. zeusedit.com, http://www.zeus.fr, http://www-zeus.desy.de.
19 From Sierra Entertainment Inc., http://games.sierra.com/games/zeus.
20 http://www.zeusthunders.com; similar questions arise at http://askthebigbrain.com/index-page2.html!

FURTHER READING

The only substantial book intended to give a complete account of Zeus is Cook 1914–1940. Cults of Zeus also occupy 144 pages of Farnell 1896. These are both period pieces in their way, but they do contain a huge amount of information that is not otherwise easily accessible. For those with German and access to good libraries, there are some copious resources, most notably the mountain of evidence collected by Schwabl and others for the huge German encyclopedia s.v. Zeus (Schwabl 1972, 1978). There is also a wide variety of information in Nilsson's (German) history of Greek religion (Nilsson 1967/74).

In English the definitive account of the figure of Zeus is that given by Walter Burkert in his history of Greek religion (1985), though its portrait can usefully be supplemented by the greyer tones of Lloyd-Jones 1971. Informative and well-defined briefer accounts have been done by Fritz Graf in *OCD*[3] 1636–8 and in K. van der Toorn, B. Becking and P.W. van der Horst, *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, 2nd edition (Leiden, 1999) 934–40. Detail about his cult must be gathered on rather a region by region basis, e.g. from Robert Parker, *Athenian Religion: a history* (Oxford, 1996) or Albert Schachter's volumes on Boiotia (Schachter 1994). For his oracle at Dodona, any general book on Greek oracles will give an account, but the standard account is Herbert Parke's, *The Oracles of Zeus: Dodona, Olympia, Ammon* (Oxford, 1967).

For inspiration, there is a lot to be said for sharing Walter Otto's visionary account of Greek religion (Otto 1954, regrettably there is no specific work on Zeus) and even for attempting to follow the more

psychoanalytic-archetypal insights of Kerényi 1976. But more reliable, judicious and no less insightful is the work of Vernant, e.g. 1982: ch. 5 'The society of the Gods', which focuses on Zeus, or the analysis of Hesiod's Prometheus stories in ch. 8; or for a vigorous experimental telling of Zeus's rise to power, you may turn to J.-P. Vernant, *The Universe, the Gods and Men* (London, 2002), a cheap paperback either in English or in French (Paris, 1999).

For myth, it is best to begin with the first-century AD handbook: Apollodorus, *The Library of Greek Mythology*, translated R. Hard, Oxford, 1997. Ancient authors such as Homer and the tragedians are easy to find; for Hesiod, it is best to turn to: Hesiod, *Theogony, Works and Days*, translated M.L. West, Oxford, 1988. The best modern handbook, giving what myths exist and in what author or work of art you discover them, is: T. Gantz, *Early Greek Myth: a guide to literary and artistic sources*, Baltimore and London, 1993 (two volumes in paperback). The best introductions to the uses and study of myth are: K. Dowden, *Uses of Greek Mythology*, London, 1992 and F. Graf, *Greek Mythology: an introduction*, Eng. transl., Baltimore and London, 1993.

To get an idea of the part that Zeus and other divine figures play in art, T.H. Carpenter, *Art and Myth in Ancient Greece* (London, 1991) remains a straightforward introduction. The evidence is, however, piled up as exhaustively as possible in *LIMC* (university libraries only). If your interest is in Zeus on Athenian red-figure vases, then Arafat 1990 offers a detailed and methodical look at their iconography beside literary accounts of the myths involved. More generally, the use of myth in art is illuminated by Susan Woodford's excellent *Images of Myths in Classical Antiquity*, Cambridge, 2003.

Turning to European culture, Seznec 1953 is the authoritative text for pagan religion and the Renaissance and is full of fascinating detail; the more mystic side is dealt with by Wind 1967. To this we can now add L. Freedman's *The Revival of the Olympian Gods in Renaissance Art*, Cambridge, 2003. If you want to find European paintings, sculptures or even music on classical mythological themes, nothing is more useful than J.D. Reid (with C. Rohmann), *The Oxford Guide to Classical Mythology in the Arts, 1300–1990s*, 2 vols (Oxford, 1993), which lists alphabetically mythological figures (Zeus, Danae . . .) and gives a chronological catalogue of representations in the arts. More

single-minded on music is D.M. Poduska, ‘Classical Myth in Music: a selective list’, *Classical World* 92.3 (1999) 195–276, which aims to amplify Reid and deal with works actually available on CD.

WORKS CITED

This bibliography is provided to help with references in the endnotes. E.g., ‘Dowden 1992: 65f.’ means my *Uses of Greek Mythology*, pages 65 and 66. For advice on further reading, please consult the ‘Further Reading’ section.

References to ancient authors. Ancient authors are referred to by ‘books’, ‘chapters’, ‘sections’, ‘lines’ – where a ‘book’ is about the size of one of our chapters and ‘chapters’ are correspondingly smaller. The authors themselves, except possibly Homer, divided their longer works into books. But it is scholars in recent centuries that have mapped out agreed chapters and other smaller divisions. So:

- Homer, *Iliad* 14.252 = Homer’s epic the *Iliad*, book 14, line 252.
- Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 1487 = Aeschylus’s play the *Agamemnon*, line 1487.
- Strabo 3.6.5 = Strabo’s *Geography* (it’s the only work of his that survives, so there is no point in stating which work we are referring to), book 3, chapter 6, section 5.

The translations in this book are my own work. To explore ancient texts further there are several useful series of translations, notably *Oxford World’s Classics* (Oxford University Press) and *Penguin Classics* (Penguin Books); but the most wide-reaching range of translations (with facing Greek/Latin text) is the *Loeb Classical Library* (Harvard University Press).

References of the form ‘Alcaeus, fr. 338.1–2 Lobel-Page’ refer to *fragments* of lost texts – on papyri or quoted by another author; here the standard edition is by Lobel, revised by Page. It is beyond the scope of this note to go into more detail.

K.W. Arafat, *Classical Zeus: a study in art and literature*, Oxford, 1990.
W. Burkert, *Greek Religion: archaic and classical*, Eng. trans., Oxford, 1985.
A.B. Cook, *Zeus: a study in ancient religion*, Cambridge, 3 vols. in 5 parts, 1914–40.
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T. Gantz, *Early Greek Myth: a guide to literary and artistic sources*, Baltimore and London, 1993 (2 vols in the paperback edition).
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M. Jost, *Sanctuaires et cultes d'Arcadie*, Paris, 1985.
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K. Latte, *Römische Religionsgeschichte*, Munich, 1960.
P.H.J. Lloyd-Jones, *The Justice of Zeus*, Berkeley CA, Los Angeles, London, 1971.
M.P. Nilsson, *Griechische Feste von religiöser Bedeutung mit Ausschluss der Attischen*, Leipzig, 1906.
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J.D. Reid (with C. Rohmann), *The Oxford Guide to Classical Mythology in the Arts, 1300–1990s*, 2 vols, Oxford, 1993.

A. Schachter, *Cults of Boiotia*, vol.3 [*BICS* Suppl. 38.3], London, 1994.

J. Schindler, 'Sprachgeschichte', in Schwabl 1978: 999–1001.

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—— *The East Face of Helicon: West Asiatic elements in Greek poetry and myth*, Oxford, 1997.

R.F. Willetts, *Cretan Cults and Festivals*, London, 1962.

E. Wind, *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance*, revised ed., Harmondsworth, 1967.

ABBREVIATIONS

This provides the key to some shorthand references, particularly in the endnotes

fr. ‘fragment’, a snippet surviving from a lost work (e.g. because someone quotes it)

DK H. Diels, revised W. Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, 6. Auflage, Berlin, 1951.

FGrH F. Jacoby (ed.), *Die Fragmenter der griechischen Historiker*, Berlin, 1926–30, Leiden 1954–8.

HP A.A. Long and D.N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, 2 vols, Cambridge, 1987.

IG *Inscriptiones Graecae*, 14 vols (not all published), Berlin, 1873–1914.

IG I^3 *Inscriptiones Graecae*, vol. I, 3rd edn, Berlin, 1981–98.

JHS *Journal of Hellenic Studies*

KIP K. Ziegler, W. Sontheimer, H. Gärtner (eds), *Der kleine Pauly: Lexicon der Antike*, Munich, 1975.

LIMC H.C. Ackermann, J.-R. Gisler (eds), *Lexicon iconographicum mythologiae classicae*, Zurich, 1981–97.

MH *Museum Helveticum*

OCD^3 S. Hornblower and A. Spawforth (eds), *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 3rd edition, Oxford, 1996.

RE W. Kroll, K. Mittelhaus and K. Ziegler (eds), *Paulys Real-Encyclopädie der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft*, Munich, 1894–1980.

SIG[3] W. Dittenberger, *Sylloge inscriptionum graecarum*, 3rd edn, Leipzig, 1915–24.

SVF J. von Arnim, *Stoicorum veterum fragmenta*, 3 vols, Leipzig, 1905, 1903, 1903.

INDEX OF PERSONAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

On the whole I prefer to transcribe Greek names as they are written in Greek – with, eg, –os *at the end and* k*'s and* ai*'s rather than* c*'s and* ae*'s. But some words are too naturalised in their Latin form. It is hard to be consistent.*

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